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Wisdom and Destiny

BY

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

Translated by

ALFRED SUTRO

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TO

GEORGETTE LEBLANC

I OFFER THIS BOOK, WHEREIN HER THOUGHT

BLENDS WITH MINE

INTRODUCTION

THIS essay on Wisdom and Destiny was to have been a thing of some twenty pages, the work of a fortnight; but the idea took root, others flocked to it, and the volume has occupied M. Maeterlinck continuously for more than two years. It has much essential kinship with the "Treasure of the Humble," though it differs therefrom in treatment; for whereas the earlier work might perhaps be described as the eager speculation of a poet athirst for beauty, we have here rather the endeavour of an earnest thinker to discover the abode of truth. And if the result of his thought be that truth and happiness are one, this was by no means the object wherewith he set forth. Here he is no longer content with exquisite visions, alluring or haunting images; he

probes into the soul of man and lays bare all his joys and his sorrows. It is as though he had forsaken the canals he loves so well — the green, calm, motionless canals that faithfully mirror the silent trees and moss-covered roofs — and had adventured boldly, unhesitatingly, on the broad river of life.

He describes this book himself, in a kind of introduction that is almost an apology, as "a few interrupted thoughts that entwine themselves, with more or less system, around two or three subjects." He declares that there is nothing it undertakes to prove; that there are none whose mission it is to convince. And so true is this, so absolutely honest and sincere is the writer, that he does not shrink from attacking, qualifying, modifying, his own propositions; from advancing, and insisting on, every objection that flits across his brain; and if such proposition survive the onslaught of its adversaries, it is only because, in the deepest of him, he holds it for absolute

truth. For this book is indeed a confession, a naïve, outspoken, unflinching description of all that passes in his mind; and even those who like not his theories still must admit that this mind is strangely beautiful.

There have been many columns filled — and doubtless will be again — with ingenious and scholarly attempts to place a definitive label on M. Maeterlinck, and his talent; to trace his thoughts to their origin, clearly denoting the authors by whom he has been influenced; in a measure to predict his future, and accurately to establish the place that he fills in the hierarchy of genius. With all this I feel that I have no concern. Such speculations doubtless have their use and serve their purpose. I shall be content if I can impress upon those who may read these lines, that in this book the man is himself, of untrammelled thought; a man possessed of the rare faculty of seeing beauty in all things, and, above all, in truth; of the still

rarer faculty of loving all things, and, above all, life.

Nor is this merely a vague and, at bottom, a more or less meaningless statement. For, indeed, considering this essay only, that deals with wisdom and destiny, at the root of it — its fundamental principle, its guiding, inspiring thought — is love. "Nothing is contemptible in this world save only scorn," he says; and for the humble, the foolish, nay, even the wicked, he has the same love, almost the same admiration, as for the sage, the saint, or the hero. Everything that exists fills him with wonder, because of its existence, and of the mysterious force that is in it; and to him love and wisdom are one, "joining hands in a circle of light." For the wisdom that holds aloof from mankind, that deems itself a thing apart, select, superior, he has scant sympathy — it has "wandered too far from the watch-fires of the tribe." But the wisdom that is human, that feeds constantly on the desires, the feelings, the hopes and the

fears of man, must needs have love ever by its side; and these two, marching together, must inevitably find themselves, sooner or later, on the ways that lead to goodness. "There comes a moment in life," he says, "when moral beauty seems more urgent, more penetrating, than intellectual beauty; when all that the mind has treasured must be bathed in the greatness of soul, lest it perish in the sandy desert, forlorn as the river that seeks in vain for the sea." But for unnecessary self-sacrifice, renouncement, abandonment of earthly joys, and all such "parasitic virtues," he has no commendation or approval; feeling that man was created to be happy, and that he is not wise who voluntarily discards a happiness to-day for fear lest it be taken from him on the morrow. "Let us wait till the hour of sacrifice sounds — till then, each man to his work. The hour will sound at last — let us not waste our time in seeking it on the dial of life."

In this book, morality, conduct, life are

surveyed from every point of the compass, but from an eminence always. Austerity holds no place in his philosophy; he finds room even "for the hours that babble aloud in their wantonness." But all those who follow him are led by smiling wisdom to the heights where happiness sits enthroned between goodness and love, where virtue rewards itself in the "silence that is the walled garden of its happiness."

It is strange to turn from this essay to *Serres Chaudes* and *La Princesse Maleine*, M. Maeterlinck's earliest efforts — the one a collection of vague images woven into poetical form, charming, dreamy, and almost meaningless; the other a youthful and very remarkable effort at imitation. In the plays that followed the *Princesse Maleine* there was the same curious, wandering sense of, and search for, a vague and mystic beauty:

"That fair beauty which no eye can see,
Of that sweet music which no ear can measure."

Introduction

In a little poem of his, *Et s'il revenait*, the last words of a dying girl, forsaken by her lover, who is asked by her sister what shall be told to the faithless one, should he ever seek to know of her last hours:

> "Et s'il m'interroge encore
> Sur la dernière heure? —
> Dites lui que j'ai souri
> De peur qu'il ne pleure . . ."

touch, perhaps, the very high-water mark of exquisite simplicity and tenderness blent with matchless beauty of expression. *Pelléas et Mélisande* was the culminating point of this, his first, period — a simple, pathetic love-story of boy and girl — love that was pure and almost passionless. It was followed by three little plays — "for marionettes," he describes them on the title-page; among them being *La Mort de Tintagiles*, the play he himself prefers of all that he has written. And then came a curious change: he wrote *Aglavaine et Selysette*. The setting is familiar to us:

the sea-shore, the ruined tower, the seat by the well; no less than the old grandmother and little Yssaline. But Aglavaine herself is strange: this woman who has lived and suffered; this queenly, majestic creature, calmly conscious of her beauty and her power; she whose overpowering, overwhelming love is yet deliberate and thoughtful. The complexities of real life are vaguely hinted at here: instead of Golaud, the mediæval, tyrannous husband, we have Selysette, the meek, self-sacrificing wife; instead of the instinctive, unconscious love of Pelléas and Mélisande, we have great burning passion. But this play, too, was only a stepping-stone — a link between the old method and the new that is to follow. For there will probably be no more plays like *Pelléas et Mélisande*, or even like *Aglavaine et Selysette*. Real men and women, real problems and disturbance of life — it is these that absorb him now. His next play will doubtless deal with a psychology more actual, in an atmosphere

less romantic; and the old familiar scene of wood, and garden, and palace corridor will be exchanged for the habitual abode of men.

I have said it was real life that absorbed him now, and yet am I aware that what seems real to him must still appear vague and visionary to many. It is, however, only a question of shifting one's point of view, or, better still, of enlarging it. Material success in life, fame, wealth — these things M. Maeterlinck passes indifferently by. There are certain ideals that are dear to many on which he looks with the vague wonder of a child. The happiness of which he dreams is an inward happiness, and within reach of successful and unsuccessful alike. And so it may well be that those content to buffet with their fellows for what are looked on as the prizes of this world, will still write him down a mere visionary, and fail to comprehend him. The materialist who complacently defines the soul as the "intellect plus the emotions," will doubtless

turn away in disgust from M. Maeterlinck's constant references to it as the seat of something mighty, mysterious, inexhaustible in life. So, too, may the rigid follower of positive religion, to whom the Deity is a power concerned only with the judgment, reward, and punishment of men, protest at his saying that "God, who must be at least as high as the highest thoughts He has implanted in the best of men, will withhold His smile from those whose sole desire has been to please Him; and they only who have done good for sake of good, and as though He existed not; they only who have loved virtue more than they loved God Himself, shall be allowed to stand by His side." But, after all, the genuine seeker after truth knows that what seemed true yesterday is to-day discovered to be only a milestone on the road; and all who value truth will be glad to listen to a man who, differing from them perhaps, yet tells them what seems true to him. And whereas in the "Treasure of the

Humble" he looked on life through a veil of poetry and dream, here he stands among his fellow-men, no longer trying to "express the inexpressible," but, in all simplicity, to tell them what he sees.

"Above all, let us never forget that an act of goodness is in itself an act of happiness. It is the flower of a long inner life of joy and contentment; it tells of peaceful hours and days on the sunniest heights of our soul." This thought lies at the root of his whole philosophy — goodness, happiness, love, supporting each other, intertwined, rewarding each other. "Let us not think virtue will crumble, though God Himself seem unjust. Where could the virtue of man find more everlasting foundation than in the seeming injustice of God?" Strange that the man who has written these words should have spent all his school life at a Jesuit college, subjected to its severe, semi-monastic discipline; compelled, at the end of his stay, to go, with the rest of his fellows, through

the customary period of "retreat," lasting ten days, when the most eloquent of the fathers would, one after the other, deliver sermons terrific to boyish imagination, sermons whose unvarying burden was Hell and the wrath of God — to be avoided only by becoming a Jesuit priest. Out of the eighteen boys in the "rhétorique" class, eleven eagerly embraced this chance of escape from damnation. As for M. Maeterlinck himself — fortunately a day-boarder only — one can fancy him wandering home at night, along the canal banks, in the silence broken only by the pealing of church bells, brooding over these mysteries . . . but how long a road must the man have travelled who, having been taught the God of Fra Angelico, himself arrives at the conception of a "God who sits smiling on a mountain, and to whom our gravest offences are only as the naughtiness of puppies playing on the hearth-rug."

His environment, no less than his schooling, helped to give a mystic tinge

to his mind. The peasants who dwelt around his father's house always possessed a peculiar fascination for him; he would watch them as they sat by their doorway, squatting on their heels, as their custom is — grave, monotonous, motionless, the smoke from their pipes almost the sole sign of life. For the Flemish peasant is a strangely inert creature, his work once done — as languid and lethargic as the canal that passes by his door. There was one cottage into which the boy would often peep on his way home from school, the home of seven brothers and one sister, all old, toothless, worn — working together in the daytime at their tiny farm; at night sitting in the gloomy kitchen, lit by one smoky lamp — all looking straight before them, saying not a word; or when, at rare intervals, a remark was made, taking it up each in turn and solemnly repeating it, with perhaps the slightest variation in form. It was amidst influences such as these that his boyhood was passed, almost isolated from

the world, brooding over lives of saints and mystics at the same time that he studied, and delighted in, Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, Goethe and Heine. For his taste has been catholic always; he admires Meredith as he admires Dickens, Hello and Pascal no less than Schopenhauer. And it is this catholicity, this open mind, this eager search for truth, that have enabled him to emerge from the mysticism that once enwrapped him to the clearer daylight of actual existence; it is this faculty of admiring all that is admirable in man and in life that some day, perhaps, may take him very far.

It will surprise many who picture him as a mere dreamy decadent, to be told that he is a man of abiding and abundant cheerfulness, who finds happiness in the simplest of things. The scent of a flower, the flight of sea-gulls around a cliff, a cornfield in sunshine — these stir him to strange delight. A deed of bravery, nobility, or of simple devotion; a mere brotherly act of kindness; the

unconscious sacrifice of the peasant who toils all day to feed and clothe his children — these awake his warm and instant sympathy. And with him, too, it is as with De Quincey when he says, "At no time of my life have I been a person to hold myself polluted by the touch or approach of any creature that wore a human shape"; and more than one unhappy outcast, condemned by the stern law of man, has been gladdened by his ready greeting and welcome. But, indeed, all this may be read of in his book — I desired but to make it clear that the book is truly a faithful mirror of the man's own thoughts, and feelings, and actions. It is a book that many will love — all those who suffer, for it will lighten their suffering; all those who love, for it will teach them to love more deeply. It is a book with its faults, doubtless, as every book must be; but it has been written straight from the heart, and will go to the heart of many. . .

ALFRED SUTRO.

WISDOM AND DESTINY

§ 1.

IN this book there will often be mention of wisdom and destiny, of happiness, justice, and love. There may seem to be some measure of irony in thus calling forth an intangible happiness where so much real sorrow prevails; a justice that may well be ideal in the bosom of an injustice, alas! only too material; a love that eludes the grasp in the midst of palpable hatred and callousness. The moment may seem but ill-chosen for leisurely search, in the hidden recess of man's heart, for motives of peace and tranquillity; occasions for

gladness, uplifting, and love; reasons for wonder and gratitude — seeing that the vast bulk of mankind, in whose name we would fain lift our voice, have not even the time or assurance to drain to the dregs the misery and desolation of life. Not to them is it given to linger over the inward rejoicing, the profound consolation, that the satisfied thinker has slowly and painfully acquired, that he knows how to prize. Thus has it often been urged against moralists, among them Epictetus, that they were apt to concern themselves with none but the wise alone. In this reproach is some truth, as some truth there must be in every reproach that is made. And indeed, if we had only the courage to listen to the simplest, the nearest, most pressing voice of our conscience, and be deaf to all else, it were doubtless our solitary duty to relieve the suffering about us

to the greatest extent in our power. It were incumbent upon us to visit and nurse the poor, to console the afflicted; to found model factories, surgeries, dispensaries, or at least to devote ourselves, as men of science do, to wresting from nature the material secrets which are most essential to man. But yet, were the world at a given moment to contain only persons thus actively engaged in helping each other, and none venturesome enough to dare snatch leisure for research in other directions, then could this charitable labour not long endure; for all that is best in the good that at this day is being done round about us, was conceived in the spirit of one of those who neglected, it may be, many an urgent, immediate duty in order to think, to commune with themselves, in order to speak. Does it follow that they did the best that was to be done? To such a question as this who

shall dare to reply? The soul that is meekly honest must ever consider the simplest, the nearest duty to be the best of all things it can do; but yet were there cause for regret had all men for all time restricted themselves to the duty that lay nearest at hand. In each generation some men have existed who held in all loyalty that they fulfilled the duties of the passing hour by pondering on those of the hour to come. Most thinkers will say that these men were right. It is well that the thinker should give his thoughts to the world, though it must be admitted that wisdom befinds itself sometimes in the reverse of the sage's pronouncement. This matters but little, however; for, without such pronouncement, the wisdom had not stood revealed; and the sage has accomplished his duty.

§ 2.

To-day misery is the disease of mankind, as disease is the misery of man. And even as there are physicians for disease, so should there be physicians for human misery. But can the fact that disease is, unhappily, only too prevalent, render it wrong for us ever to speak of health? which were indeed as though, in anatomy — the physical science that has most in common with morals — the teacher confined himself exclusively to the study of the deformities that greater or lesser degeneration will induce in the organs of man. We have surely the right to demand that his theories be based on the healthy and vigorous body; as we have also the right to demand that the moralist, who fain would see beyond the present hour, should take as his standard the soul that is happy, or that at least possesses every element of

happiness, save only the necessary consciousness.

We live in the bosom of great injustice; but there can be, I imagine, neither cruelty nor callousness in our speaking, at times, as though this injustice had ended, else should we never emerge from our circle.

It is imperative that there should be some who dare speak, and think, and act as though all men were happy; for otherwise, when the day comes for destiny to throw open to all the people's garden of the promised land, what happiness shall the others find there, what justice, what beauty or love? It may be urged, it is true, that it were best, first of all, to consider the most pressing needs, yet is this not always wisest; it is often of better avail from the start to seek that which is highest. When the waters beleaguer the home of the peasant in Holland, the sea or the neighbouring river

having swept down the dyke that protected the country, most pressing is it then for the peasant to safeguard his cattle, his grain, his effects; but wisest to fly to the top of the dyke, summoning those who live with him, and from thence meet the flood, and do battle. Humanity up to this day has been like an invalid tossing and turning on his couch in search of repose; but therefore none the less have words of true consolation come only from those who spoke as though man were freed from all pain. For, as man was created for health, so was mankind created for happiness; and to speak of its misery only, though that misery be everywhere and seem everlasting, is only to say words that fall lightly and soon are forgotten. Why not speak as though mankind were always on the eve of great certitude, of great joy? Thither, in truth, is man led by his instinct, though

he never may live to behold the long-wished-for to-morrow. It is well to believe that there needs but a little more thought, a little more courage, more love, more devotion to life, a little more eagerness, one day to fling open wide the portals of joy and of truth. And this thing may still come to pass. Let us hope that one day all mankind will be happy and wise; and though this day never should dawn, to have hoped for it cannot be wrong. And in any event, it is helpful to speak of happiness to those who are sad, that thus at least they may learn what it is that happiness means. They are ever inclined to regard it as something beyond them, extraordinary, out of their reach. But if all who may count themselves happy were to tell, very simply, what it was that brought happiness to them, the others would see that between sorrow and joy the difference is but as between

a gladsome, enlightened acceptance of life and a hostile, gloomy submission; between a large and harmonious conception of life, and one that is stubborn and narrow. "Is that all?" the unhappy would cry. "But we too have within us, then, the elements of this happiness." Surely you have them within you! There lives not a man but has them, those only excepted upon whom great physical calamity has fallen. But speak not lightly of this happiness. There is no other. He is the happiest man who best understands his happiness; for he is of all men most fully aware that it is only the lofty idea, the untiring, courageous, human idea, that separates gladness from sorrow. Of this idea it is helpful to speak, and as often as may be; not with the view of imposing our own idea upon others, but in order that they who may listen shall, little by little, conceive the desire

to possess an idea of their own. For in no two men is it the same. The one that you cherish may well bring no comfort to me; nor shall all your eloquence touch the hidden springs of my life. Needs must I acquire my own, in myself, by myself; but you unconsciously make this the easier for me, by telling of the idea that is yours. It may happen that I shall find solace in that which brings sorrow to you, and that which to you speaks of gladness may be fraught with affliction for me. But no matter; into my grief will enter all that you saw of beauty and comfort, and into my joy there will pass all that was great in your sadness, if indeed my joy be on the same plane as your sadness. It behoves us, the first thing of all, to prepare in our soul a place of some loftiness, where this idea may be lodged; as the priests of ancient religions laid the

mountain peak bare, and cleared it of thorn and of root for the fire to descend from heaven. There may come to us any day, from the depths of the planet Mars, the infallible formula of happiness, conveyed in the final truth as to the aim and the government of the universe. Such a formula could only bring change or advancement unto our spiritual life in the degree of the desire and expectation of advancement in which we might long have been living. The formula would be the same for all men, yet would each one benefit only in the proportion of the eagerness, purity, unselfishness, knowledge, that he had stored up in his soul. All morality, all study of justice and happiness, should truly be no more than preparation, provision on the vastest scale—a way of gaining experience, a stepping-stone laid down for what is to follow. Surely, desirable day of all days were the one when at

last we should live in absolute truth, in immovable logical certitude; but in the meantime it is given us to live in a truth more important still, the truth of our soul and our character; and some wise men have proved that this life can be lived in the midst of gravest material errors.

§ 3.

Is it idle to speak of justice, happiness, morals, and all things connected therewith, before the hour of science has sounded—that definitive hour, wherein all that we cling to may crumble? The darkness that hangs over our life will then, it may be, pass away; and much that we do in the darkness shall be otherwise done in the light. But nevertheless do the essential events of our moral and physical life come to pass in the darkness as completely,

as inevitably, as they would in the light. Our life must be lived while we wait for the word that shall solve the enigma, and the happier, the nobler our life, the more vigorous shall it become; and we shall have the more courage, clear-sightedness, boldness, to seek and desire the truth. And happen what may, the time can be never ill-spent that we give to acquiring some knowledge of self. Whatever our relation may become to this world in which we have being, in our soul there will yet be more feelings, more passions, more secrets unchanged and unchanging, than there are stars that connect with the earth, or mysteries fathomed by science. In the bosom of truth undeniable, truth all absorbing, man shall doubtless soar upwards; but still, as he rises, still shall his soul unerringly guide him; and the grander the truth of the universe, the more solace and peace it may bring, the more shall the

problems of justice, morality, happiness, love, present to the eyes of all men the semblance they ever have worn in the eyes of the thinker.

We should live as though we were always on the eve of the great revelation; and we should be ready with welcome, with warmest and keenest and fullest, most heartfelt and intimate welcome. And whatever the form it shall take on the day that it comes to us, the best way of all to prepare for its fitting reception is to crave for it now, to desire it as lofty, as perfect, as vast, as ennobling as the soul can conceive. It must needs be more beautiful, glorious, and ample than the best of our hopes; for, where it differ therefrom or even frustrate them, it must of necessity bring something nobler, loftier, nearer to the nature of man, for it will bring us the truth. To man, though all that he value go under, the intimate truth

of the universe must be wholly, pre-eminently admirable. And though, on the day it unveils, our meekest desires turn to ashes and float on the wind, still shall there linger within us all we have prepared; and the admirable will enter our soul, the volume of its waters being as the depth of the channel that our expectation has fashioned.

§ 4.

Is it necessary that we should conceive ourselves to be superior to the universe? Our reason may prove what it will: our reason is only a feeble ray that has issued from Nature; a tiny atom of that whole which Nature alone shall judge. Is it fitting that the ray of light should desire to alter the lamp whence it springs?

That loftiness within us, from whose summit we venture to pass judgment on

the totality of life, to absolve or condemn it, is doubtless the merest pin-prick, visible to our eye alone, on the illimitable sphere of life. It is wise to think and to act as though all that happened to man were all that man most required. It is not long ago — to cite only one of the problems that the instinct of our planet is invited to solve — that a scheme was on foot to inquire of the thinkers of Europe whether it should rightly be held as a gain or a loss to mankind if an energetic, strenuous, persistent race, which some, through prejudice doubtless, still regard as inferior to the Aryan in qualities of heart and of soul — if the Jews, in a word, were to vanish from the face of the earth, or to acquire preponderance there. I am satisfied that the sage might answer, without laying himself open to the charge of indifference or undue resignation, "In what comes to pass will be happiness." Many things

happen that seem unjust to us; but of all the achievements of reason there has been none so helpful as the discovery of the loftier reason that underlies the misdeeds of nature. It is from the slow and gradual vindication of the unknown force that we deemed at first to be pitiless, that our moral and physical life has derived its chief prop and support. If a race disappears that conforms with our every ideal, it will be only because our ideal still falls short of the grand ideal, which is, as we have said, the intimate truth of the universe.

Our own experience has taught us that even in this world of reality there exist dreams and desires, thoughts and feelings of beauty, of justice, and love, that are of the noblest and loftiest. And if there be any that shrink from the test of reality — in other words, from the mysterious, nameless power of life — it follows that

these must be different, but not that their beauty is less, or their vastness, or power to console. Till reality confront us, it is well, it may be, to cherish ideals that we hold to surpass it in beauty; but once face to face with reality, then must the ideal flame that has fed on our noblest desires be content to throw faithful light on the less fragile, less tender beauty of the mighty mass that crushes these desires. Nor does this seem to me to imply a mere drowsy fatalism, or servile acquiescence, or optimism shrinking from action. The sage no doubt must many a time forfeit some measure of the blind, the headstrong, fanatical zeal that has enabled some men, whose reason was fettered and bound, to achieve results that are nigh superhuman; but therefore none the less is it certain that no man of upright soul should go forth in search

of illusion or blindness, of zeal or vigour, in a region inferior to that of his noblest hours. To do our true duty in life, it must ever be done with the aid of all that is highest in our soul, highest in the truth that is ours. And even though it be permissible at times in actual, every-day life to compromise with events, and not follow impulse to the ruthless end — as did St. Just, for instance, who in his admirable and ardent desire for universal peace, happiness, justice, in all good faith sent thousands to the scaffold — in the life of thought it is our unvarying duty to pursue our thought right to the end.

Again, the knowledge that our actions still await the seal of final truth can deter from action those only who would have remained no less inert had no such knowledge been theirs. Thought that rises encourages where it disheartens. And to those of a loftier vision, prepared in advance to

admire the truth that will nullify all they have done, it seems only natural still to endeavour with all might and main to enhance what yet may be termed the justice, the beauty, the reason of this our earth. They know that to penetrate deeper, to understand, to respect — all this is enhancement. Above all, they have faith in "the idea of the universe." They are satisfied that every effort that tends to improvement approaches the secret intention of life; they are taught by the failure of their noblest endeavours, by the resistance of this mighty world, to discover anew fresh reasons for wonder, for ardour, for hope.

As you climb up a mountain towards nightfall, the trees and the houses, the steeple, the fields and the orchards, the road, and even the river, will gradually dwindle and fade, and at last disappear in the gloom that steals over the valley.

But the threads of light that shine from the houses of men and pierce through the blackest of nights, these shine on undimmed. And every step that you take to the summit reveals but more lights, and more, in the hamlets asleep at your foot. For light, though so fragile, is perhaps the one thing of all that yields naught of itself as it faces immensity. Thus it is with our moral light too, when we look upon life from some slight elevation. It is well that reflection should teach us to disburden our soul of base passions; but it should not discourage, or weaken, our humblest desire for justice, for truth, and for love.

Whence comes this rule that I thus propound? Nay, I know not myself. To me it seems helpful and requisite; nor could I give reasons other than spring from the feelings alone. Such reasons, however, at times should by no means

be treated too lightly. If I should ever attain a summit whence this law seemed useless to me, I would listen to the secret instinct bidding me not linger, but climb on still higher, till its usefulness should once again be clearly apparent to me.

§ 5.

This general introduction over, let us speak more particularly of the influence that wisdom can have upon destiny. And, the occasion presenting itself here, I shall do well perhaps to state now, at the very beginning, that in this book it will be vain to seek for any rigorous method. For indeed it is but composed of oft-interrupted thoughts, that entwine themselves with more or less system around two or three subjects. Its object is not to convince; there is nothing it professes to prove. Besides, in life books have by no

means the importance that writers and readers claim for them. We should regard them as did a friend of mine, a man of great wisdom, who listened one day to the recital of the last moments of the Emperor Antoninus Pius. Antoninus Pius — who was perhaps truly the best and most perfect man this world has known, better even than Marcus Aurelius; for in addition to the virtues, the kindness, the deep feeling and wisdom of his adopted son, he had something of greater virility and energy, of simpler happiness, something more real, spontaneous, closer to everyday life — Antoninus Pius lay on his bed, awaiting the summons of death, his eyes dim with unbidden tears, his limbs moist with the pale sweat of agony. At that moment there entered the captain of the guard, come to demand the watchword, such being the custom. *Æquanimitas — evenness of mind*, he replied, as he

turned his head to the eternal shadow. It is well that we should love and admire that word, said my friend. But better still, he added, to have it in us to sacrifice, unknown to others, unknown even to ourselves, the time fortune accords us wherein to admire it, in favour of the first little useful, living deed that the same fortune incessantly offers to every willing heart.

§ 6.

"It was doubtless the will of their destiny that men and events should oppress them whithersoever they went," said an author of the heroes of his book. Thus it is with the majority of men; indeed, with all those who have not yet learned to distinguish between exterior and moral destiny. They are like a little bewildered stream that I chanced to espy

one evening as I stood on the hillside. I beheld it far down in the valley, staggering, struggling, climbing, falling: blindly groping its way to the great lake that slumbered, the other side of the forest, in the peace of the dawn. Here it was a block of basalt that forced the streamlet to wind round and about four times; there, the roots of a hoary tree; further on still, the mere recollection of an obstacle now gone for ever thrust it back to its source, bubbling in impotent fury, divided for all time from its goal and its gladness. But, in another direction, at right angles almost to the distraught, unhappy, useless stream, a force superior to the force of instinct had traced a long, greenish canal, calm, peaceful, deliberate; that flowed steadily across the country, across the crumbling stones, across the obedient forest, on its clear and unerring, unhurrying way from its

distant source on the horizon to the same tranquil, shining lake. And I had at my feet before me the image of the two great destinies offered to man.

§ 7.

Side by side with those whom men and events oppress, there are others who have within them some kind of inner force, which has its will not only with men, but even with the events that surround them. Of this force they are fully aware, and indeed it is nothing more than a knowledge of self that has far overstepped the ordinary limits of consciousness.

Our consciousness is our home, our refuge from the caprice of fate, our centre of happiness and strength. But these things have been said so often that we need do no more than refer to them, and indicate them as our starting-point.

Ennoblement comes to man in the degree that his consciousness quickens, and the nobler the man has become, the profounder must consciousness be. Admirable exchange takes place here; and even as love is insatiable in its craving for love, so is consciousness insatiable in its craving for growth, for moral uplifting; and moral uplifting for ever is yearning for consciousness.

§ 8.

But this knowledge of self is only too often regarded as implying no more than a knowledge of our defects and our qualities, whereas it does indeed extend infinitely further, to mysteries vastly more helpful. To know oneself in repose suffices not, nor does it suffice to know oneself in the past or the present. Those within whom lies the force that I speak of know themselves in the future too.

Consciousness of self with the greatest of men implies consciousness up to a point of their star or their destiny. They are aware of some part of their future, because they have already become part of this future. They have faith in themselves, for they know in advance how events will be received in their soul. The event in itself is pure water that flows from the pitcher of fate, and seldom has it either savour or perfume or colour. But even as the soul may be wherein it seeks shelter, so will the event become joyous or sad, become tender or hateful, become deadly or quick with life. To those round about us there happen incessant and countless adventures, whereof every one, it would seem, contains a germ of heroism; but the adventure passes away, and heroic deed is there none. But when Jesus Christ met the Samaritan, met a few children, an adulterous woman, then did

humanity rise three times in succession to the level of God.

§ 9.

It might almost be said that there happens to men only that they desire. It is true that on certain external events our influence is of the feeblest, but we have all-powerful action on that which these events shall become in ourselves — in other words, on their spiritual part, on what is radiant, undying within them. There are thousands of men within whom this spiritual part, that is craving for birth in every misfortune, or love, or chance meeting, has known not one moment of life — these men pass away like a straw on the stream. And others there are within whom this immortal part absorbs all; these are like islands that have sprung up in the ocean; for

they have found immovable anchorage, whence they issue commands that their destiny needs must obey. The life of most men will be saddened or lightened by the thing that may chance to befall them — in the men whom I speak of, whatever may happen is lit up by their inward life. When you love, it is not your love that forms part of your destiny; but the knowledge of self that you will have found, deep down in your love — this it is that will help to fashion your life. If you have been deceived, it is not the deception that matters, but the forgiveness whereto it gave birth in your soul, and the loftiness, wisdom, completeness of this forgiveness — by these shall your life be steered to destiny's haven of brightness and peace; by these shall your eyes see more clearly than if all men had ever been faithful. But if, by this act of deceit, there have come not more

simpleness, loftier faith, wider range to your love, then have you been deceived in vain, and may truly say nothing has happened.

§ 10.

Let us always remember that nothing befalls us that is not of the nature of ourselves. There comes no adventure but wears to our soul the shape of our every-day thoughts; and deeds of heroism are but offered to those who, for many long years, have been heroes in obscurity and silence. And whether you climb up the mountain or go down the hill to the valley, whether you journey to the end of the world or merely walk round your house, none but yourself shall you meet on the highway of fate. If Judas go forth to-night, it is towards Judas his steps will tend, nor will chance for betrayal be

lacking; but let Socrates open his door, he shall find Socrates asleep on the threshold before him, and there will be occasion for wisdom. Our adventures hover around us like bees round the hive when preparing to swarm. They wait till the mother-idea has at last come forth from our soul, and no sooner has she appeared than they all come rushing towards her. Be false, and falsehoods will haste to you; love, and adventures will flock to you, throbbing with love. They seem to be all on the watch for the signal we hoist from within: and if the soul grow wiser towards evening, the sorrow will grow wiser too that the soul had fashioned for itself in the morning.

§ 11.

No great inner event befalls those who summon it not; and yet is there germ of great inner event in the smallest

occurrence of life. But events such as these are apportioned by justice, and to each man is given of the spoil in accord with his merits. We become that which we discover in the sorrows and joys that befall us; and the least expected caprices of fate soon mould themselves on our thoughts. It is in our past that destiny finds all her weapons, her vestments, her jewels. Were the only son of Thersites and Socrates to die the same day, Socrates' grief would in no way resemble the grief of Thersites. Misfortune or happiness, it seems, must be chastened ere it knock at the door of the sage; but only by stooping low can it enter the commonplace soul.

§ 12.

As we become wiser we escape some of our instinctive destinies. There is in us all sufficient desire for wisdom to

transform into consciousness most of the hazards of life. And all that has thus been transformed can belong no more to the hostile powers. A sorrow your soul has changed into sweetness, to indulgence or patient smiles, is a sorrow that shall never return without spiritual ornament; and a fault or defect you have looked in the face can harm you no more, or even be harmful to others.

Instinct and destiny are for ever conferring together; they support one another, and rove, hand in hand, round the man who is not on his guard. And whoever is able to curb the blind force of instinct within him, is able to curb the force of external destiny also. He seems to create some kind of sanctuary, whose inviolability will be in the degree of his wisdom; and the consciousness he has acquired becomes the centre of a circle of light, within which the passer-by is secure from the caprice

of fate. Had Jesus Christ or Socrates dwelt in Agamemnon's palace among the Atrides, then had there been no Oresteia; nor would Œdipus ever have dreamed of destroying his sight if they had been tranquilly seated on the threshold of Jocasta's abode. Fatality shrinks back abashed from the soul that has more than once conquered her; there are certain disasters she dare not send forth when this soul is near; and the sage, as he passes by, intervenes in numberless tragedies.

§ 13.

The mere presence of the sage suffices to paralyse destiny; and of this we find proof in the fact that there exists scarce a drama wherein a true sage appears; when such is the case, the event needs must halt before reaching bloodshed and tears. Not only is there no drama wherein sage is in

conflict with sage, but indeed there are very few whose action revolves round a sage. And truly, can we imagine that an event shall turn into tragedy between men who have earnestly striven to gain knowledge of self? But the heroes of famous tragedies do not question their souls profoundly; and it follows therefrom that the beauty the tragic poet presents is only a captive thing, is fettered with chains; for were his heroes to soar to the height the real hero would gain, their weapons would fall to the ground, and the drama itself become peace — the peace of enlightenment. It is only in the Passion of Christ, the Phædo, Prometheus, the murder of Orpheus, the sacrifice of Antigone — it is only in these that we find the drama of the sage, the solitary drama of wisdom. But elsewhere it is rarely indeed that tragic poets will allow a sage to appear on the scene, though it be for an instant. They are

afraid of a lofty soul; for they know that events are no less afraid, and that a murder committed in the presence of the sage seems quite other than the murder committed in the presence of those whose soul still knows not itself. Had Œdipus possessed the inner refuge that Marcus Aurelius, for instance, had been able to erect in himself — a refuge whereto he could fly at all times — had he only acquired some few of the certitudes open to every thinker — what could destiny then have done? What would she have entrapped in her snares? Would they have contained aught besides the pure light that streams from the lofty soul, as it grows more beautiful still in misfortune?

But where is the sage in Œdipus? Is it Tiresias? He reads the future, but knows not that goodness and forgiveness are lords of the future. He knows the truth of the gods, but not the truth of

mankind. He ignores the wisdom that takes misfortune to her arms and would fain give it of her strength. Truly they who know still know nothing if the strength of love be not theirs; for the true sage is not he who sees, but he who, seeing the furthest, has the deepest love for mankind. He who sees without loving is only straining his eyes in the darkness.

§ 14.

We are told that the famous tragedies show us the struggle of man against Fate. I believe, on the contrary, that scarcely a drama exists wherein fatality truly does reign. Search as I may, I cannot find one which exhibits the hero in conflict with destiny pure and simple. For indeed it is never destiny that he attacks; it is with wisdom he is always at war. Real fatality exists only in certain external disasters—as

disease, accident, the sudden death of those we love; but *inner fatality* there is none. Wisdom has will power sufficient to rectify all that does not deal death to the body; it will even at times invade the narrow domain of external fatality. It is true that we must have amassed considerable and patient treasure within us for this will power to find the resources it needs.

§ 15.

The statue of destiny casts a huge shadow over the valley, which it seems to enshroud in gloom; but this shadow has clearest outline for such as look down from the mountain. We are born, it may be, with the shadow upon us; but to many men is it granted to emerge from beneath it; and even though infirmity or weakness keep us, till death, confined in these sombre regions, still we can fly thence at times on

the wings of our hopes and our thoughts. There may well be some few over whom Fate exerts a more tyrannous power, by virtue of instinct, heredity and other laws more relentless still, more profound and obscure; but even when we writhe beneath unmerited, crushing misfortune; even when fortune compels us to do the thing we should never have done, had our hands been free; even then, when the deed has been done, the misfortune has happened, it still rests with ourselves to deny her the least influence on that which shall come to pass in our soul. She may strike at the heart that is eager for good, but still is she helpless to keep back the light that shall stream to this heart from the error acknowledged, the pain undergone. It is not in her power to prevent the soul from transforming each single affliction into thoughts, into feelings and treasure she dare not profane. Be her empire never so

great over all things external, she always must halt when she finds on the threshold a silent guardian of the inner life. And if it be granted her then to pass through to the hidden dwelling, it is but as a bountiful guest she will enter, bringing with her new pledges of peace: refreshing the slumberous air, and making still clearer the light, the tranquillity deeper—illuming all the horizon.

§ 16.

Let us ask once again: what had destiny done if she had, by some blunder, lured Epicurus, or Marcus Aurelius, or Antoninus Pius into the snares that she laid around Œdipus? I will even assume that she might have compelled Antoninus, for instance, to murder his father, and, all unwittingly, to profane the couch of his mother. Would that noble

sovereign's soul have been hopelessly crushed? Would the end of it all not have been as the end of all dramas must be wherein the sage is attacked — great sorrow surely, but also great radiance that springs from this sorrow, and already is partly triumphant over the shadow of grief? Needs must Antoninus have wept as all men must weep; but tears can quench not one ray in the soul that shines with no borrowed light. To the sage the road is long that leads from grief to despair; it is a road untravelled by wisdom. When the soul has attained such loftiness as the life of Antoninus shows us that his had acquired, then is each falling tear illumined by beautiful thought and by generous feeling. He would have taken calamity to him, to all that was purest, most vast, in his soul; and misfortune, like water, espouses the form of the vase that contains it. Antoninus, we say, would have

brought resignation to bear; but this is a word that too often conceals the true working of a noble heart. There is no soul so petty but what it too may believe that it is resigned. Alas! it is not resignation that comforts us, raises and chastens; but indeed the thoughts and the feelings in whose name we embrace resignation; and it is here that wisdom doles out the rewards they have earned to her faithful.

Some ideas there are that lie beyond the reach of any catastrophe. He will be far less exposed to disaster who cherishes ideas within him that soar high above the indifference, selfishness, vanities of everyday life. And therefore, come happiness or sorrow, the happiest man will be he within whom the greatest idea shall burn the most ardently. Had fate so desired it, Antoninus also, perhaps, had been guilty of incest and parricide; but his inward

life would not have been crushed thereby, as was that of Œdipus; nay, these very catastrophes would have given him mightier strength, and destiny would have fled in despair, strewing the ground by the emperor's palace with her nets and her blunted weapons; for even as triumph of dictators and consuls could be celebrated only in Rome, so can the true triumph of Fate take place nowhere save in our soul.

§ 17.

Where do we find the fatality in "Hamlet," "King Lear," in "Macbeth"? Is its throne not erected in the very centre of the old king's madness, on the lowest degree of the young prince's imagination, at the very summit of the Thane's morbid cravings? Macbeth we may well pass by; not need we linger over Cordelia's father,

for his absence of consciousness is all too manifest; but Hamlet, Hamlet the thinker — is he wise? Is the elevation sufficient wherefrom he looks down on the crimes of Elsinore? He seems to regard them from the loftiest heights of his intellect; but in the light-clad mountain range of wisdom there are other peaks that tower far above the heights of the intellect — the peaks of goodness and confidence, of indulgence and love. If he could have surveyed the misdeeds of Elsinore from the eminence whence Marcus Aurelius or Fénelon, for instance, had surely surveyed them, what would have resulted then? And, first of all, does it not often happen that a crime which is suddenly conscious of the gaze of a mightier soul will pause, and halt, and at last crawl back to its lair; even as bees cease from labour when a gleam of sunshine steals into the hive?

The real destiny, the inner destiny, would in any event have followed its course in the souls of Claudius and Gertrude; for these sinful ones had delivered themselves into its hands, as must needs be the case with those whose ways are evil; but would it have dared to spread its influence abroad if one of those sages had been in the palace? Would it have dared to overstep the shining, denouncing barrier that his presence would have imposed, and maintained, in front of the palace gates? When the sage's destiny blends with that of men of inferior wisdom, the sage raises them to his level, but himself will rarely descend. Neither on earth nor in the domain of fatality do rivers flow back to their source. But to return: let us imagine a sovereign, all-powerful soul — that of Jesus, in Hamlet's place at Elsinore; would the tragedy then have flown on till

it reached the four deaths at the end? Is that conceivable? A crime may be never so skilfully planned — when the eyes of deep wisdom rest on it, it becomes like a trivial show that we offer to very small children at nightfall: some magic-lantern performance, whose tawdry imposture a last gleam of sunshine lays bare. Can you conceive Jesus Christ — nay, any wise man you have happened to meet — in the midst of the unnatural gloom that overhung Elsinore? Is not every action of Hamlet induced by a fanatical impulse, which tells him that duty consists in revenge alone? and does it need superhuman effort to recognise that revenge never can be a duty? I say again that Hamlet thinks much, but that he is by no means wise. He cannot conceive where to look for the weak spot in destiny's armour. Lofty thoughts suffice not always to overcome destiny; for against these destiny can oppose thoughts

that are loftier still; but what destiny has ever withstood thoughts that are simple and good, thoughts that are tender and loyal? We can triumph over destiny only by doing the very reverse of the evil she fain would have us commit. For no tragedy can be inevitable. At Elsinore there is not a soul but refuses to see, and hence the catastrophe; but a soul that is quick with life will compel those around it to open their eyes. Where was it written that Laertes, Ophelia, Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, should die — where, save in Hamlet's pitiful blindness? But was this blindness inevitable? Why speak of destiny when a simple thought had sufficed to arrest all the forces of murder? The empire of destiny is surely sufficiently vast. I acknowledge her might when a wall crashes down on my head, when the storm drives a ship on the rocks, when disease attacks those whom I love; but into

man's soul she never will come, uncalled. Hamlet is unhappy because he moves in unnatural darkness; and his ignorance puts the seal upon his unhappiness. We have but to issue commands and fate will obey — there is nothing in the world that will offer such long and patient submission. Horatio, up to the last, could have issued commands; but his master's shadow lay on him, and he lacked the courage to shake himself free. Had there been but one soul courageous enough to cry out the truth, then had the history of Elsinore not been shrouded in tears of hatred and horror. But misfortune, that bends beneath the fingers of wisdom like the cane that we cut from the tree, becomes iron, and murderously rigid, in the hand of unconsciousness. Once again, all depended here, not on destiny, but on the wisdom of the wisest, and this Hamlet was; therefore did he, by his presence, become the

centre of the drama of Elsinore; and on himself only did the wisdom of Hamlet depend.

§ 18.

And if you look distrustfully on imaginary tragedies, you have only to investigate some of the greatest dramas of authentic history to find that in these too the destinies of men are no different: that their ways are the same, and their petulance, their revolt and submission. You will discover that there too it is a force of man's own creating that plays the most active part in what it pleases us to term "fatality." This fatality, it is true, is enormous, but rarely irresistible. It does not leap forth at a given moment from an inexorable, inaccessible, unfathomable abyss. It is built up of the energy, the desires and suffering, the thoughts and passions of our brothers; and these

passions should be well known to us, for they differ not from our own. In our most inexplicable moments, in our most mysterious, unexpected misfortunes, we rarely find ourselves struggling with an invisible enemy, or one that is entirely foreign to us. Why strive of our own free will to enlarge the domain of the inevitable? They who are truly strong are aware that among the forces that oppose their schemes there are some that they know not; but against such as they do know they fight on as bravely as though no others existed; and these men will be often victorious. We shall have added most strangely to our safety and happiness and peace the day that our sloth and our ignorance shall have ceased to term fatal, what should truly be looked on as human and natural by our intelligence and our energy.

§ 19.

Let us consider one noteworthy victim of destiny, Louis XVI. Never, it would seem, did relentless fatality clamour so loudly for the destruction of an unfortunate man; of one who was gentle, and good, and virtuous, and honourable. And yet, as we look more closely into the pages of history, do we not find that fatality distils her poison from the victim's own wavering feebleness, his own trivial duplicity, blindness, unreason, and vanity? And if it be true that some kind of predestination governs every circumstance of life, it appears to be no less true that such predestination exists in our character only; and to modify character must surely be easy to the man of unfettered will, for is it not constantly changing in the lives of the vast bulk of men? Is your own

character, at thirty, the same as it was when you were ten years younger? It will be better or worse in the measure that you have believed that disloyalty, wickedness, hatred and falsehood have triumphed in life, or goodness, and truth, and love. And you will have thought that you witnessed the triumph of hatred or love, of truth or of falsehood, in exact accord with the lofty or baser idea as to the happiness and aim of your life that will slowly have arisen within you. For it is our most secret desire that governs and dominates all. If your eyes look for nothing but evil, you will always see evil triumphant; but if you have learned to let your glance rest on sincerity, simpleness, truth, you will ever discover, deep down in all things, the silent overpowering victory of that which you love.

§ 20.

It is scarcely from this point of view, however, that Louis XVI. should be judged. Let us rather imagine ourselves in his place, in the midst of his doubt and bewilderment, his darkness and difficulties. Now that we know all that happened it is easy enough to declare what should have been done; but are we ourselves, at this moment, aware of what is our duty? Are we not contending with troubles and doubts of our own? and were it not well that they who one day shall pass judgment upon us should seek out the track that our footsteps have left on the sands of the hillock we climbed, hoping thence to discover the future? Louis XVI. was bewildered: do we know what ought to be done? Do we know what we best had abandon, what we best had defend? Are we wiser than he as we waver betwixt the

rights of human reason and those that circumstance claims? And when hesitation is conscientious, does it not often possess all the elements of duty? There is one most important lesson to be learned from the example of this unfortunate king: and it is that when doubt confronts us which in itself is noble and great, it is our duty to march bravely onwards, turning neither to right nor to left of us, going infinitely further than seems to be reasonable, practical, just. The idea that we hold to-day of duty, and justice, and truth, may seem clear to us now, and advanced and unfettered; but how different will it appear a few years, a few centuries later! Had Louis XVI. done what we should have done — we who now are aware of what had been the right thing to do — had he frankly renounced all the follies of royal prerogative, and loyally adopted the new truth and loftier justice that had

sprung into being, then should we to-day be admiring his genius. And the king himself, perhaps — for he was not a foolish man, or wicked — may have for one instant beheld his own situation with the clear eye of an impartial philosopher. That at least is by no means impossible, historically or psychologically. Even in our most solemn hours of doubt it is rare that we know not where we should look for the fixed point of duty, its unalterable summit; but we feel that there stretches a distance too wide to be travelled between the actual thing to be done and this mountain-peak, that glitters afar in its solitude. And yet it is proved by man's whole history — by the life of each one of us — that it is on the loftiest summit that right has always its dwelling; and that to this summit we too at the end must climb, after much precious time has been lost on many an

intermediate eminence. And what is a sage, a great man, a hero, if not one who has dared to go, alone and ahead of the others, to the deserted table-land that lay more or less within sight of all men?

§ 21.

We do not imply that Louis XVI. should necessarily have been a man of this stamp, a man of genius; although to have genius seems almost the duty of him who sways in his hands the destiny of vast numbers of men. Nor do we claim that the best men among us to-day would have been able to escape his errors, or the misfortunes to which they gave rise. And yet there is one thing certain: that of all these misfortunes none had superhuman origin; not one was supernaturally, or too mysteriously, inevitable. They came not from another world; they were

launched by no monstrous god, capricious and incomprehensible. They were born of an idea of justice that men failed to grasp; an idea of justice that suddenly had wakened in life, but never had lain asleep in the reason of man. And is there a thing in this world can be more reassuring, or nearer to us, more profoundly human, than an idea of justice? Louis XVI. may well have regretted that this idea, that shattered his peace, should have awakened during his reign; but this was the only reproach he could level at fate; and when we murmur at fate ourselves our complaints have much the same value. For the rest, it is legitimate enough to suppose that there needed but one single act of energy, absolute loyalty, disinterested, clear-sighted wisdom, to change the whole course of events. If the flight to Varennes — in itself an act of duplicity and culpable weakness — had

only been arranged a little less childishly, foolishly (as any man would have arranged it who was accustomed to the habits of life), there can be not a doubt that Louis XVI. would never have died on the scaffold. Was it a god, or his blind reliance on Marie Antoinette, that led him to entrust de Fersen — a stupid, conceited, and tactless creature — with the preparations and control of this disastrous journey? Was it a force instinct with great mystery, or only his own unconsciousness, heedlessness, thoughtlessness, and a kind of strange apathetic submission — such as the weak and the idle will often display at moments of danger, when they seem almost to challenge their star — that induced him again and again, at each change of horses, to put his head out of the carriage window, and thus be recognised three or four times? And at the moment that decided all, in that throbbing and sinister

night of Varennes — a night indeed when fatality should have been an immovable mountain governing all the horizon — do we not see this fatality stumbling at every step, like a child that is learning to walk and wonders is it this white pebble or that tuft of grass that will cause it to fall to right or to left of the path? And then, at the tragic halt of the carriage, in that black night: at the terrible cry sent forth by young Drouet, "In the name of the Nation!" there had needed but one order from the king, one lash of the whip, one pull at the collar — and you and I would probably not have been born, for the history of the world had been different. And again, in presence of the mayor, who stood there, respectful, disconcerted, hesitating, ready to fling every gate open had but one imperious word been spoken; and at the shop of M. Sauce, the worthy village grocer; and, last of all, when

Goguelat and de Choiseul had arrived with their hussars, bringing rescue, salvation — did not all depend, a hundred times over, on a mere yes or no, a step, a gesture, a look? Take any ten men with whom you are intimate, let them have been King of France, you can foretell the issue of their ten nights. Ah, it was that night truly that heaped shame on fatality, that laid bare her weakness! For that night revealed to all men the dependence, the wretched and shivering poverty of the great mysterious force that, in moments of undue resignation, seems to weigh so heavily on life! Never before has she been beheld so completely despoiled of her vestments, of her imposing, deceptive robes, as she incessantly came and went that night, from death to life, from life to death; throwing herself at last, like a woman distraught, into the arms of an unhappy king, whom she besought till

dawn for a decision, an existence, that she herself never can find save only in the depths of the will and the intellect of man.

§ 22.

And yet this is not the entire truth. It is helpful to regard events in this fashion, thus seeking to minimise the importance of fatality, looking upon it as some vague and wandering creature that we have to shelter and guide. We gain the more courage thereby, the more confidence, initiative; and these are qualities essential to the doing of anything useful; and they shall stand us in good stead, too, when our own hour of danger draws nigh. But for all that, we do not pretend that there truly is no other force—that all things can be governed by our will and our intellect. These must be trained to act like the soldiers of a

conquering army; they must learn to thrive at the cost of all that opposes them; they must find sustenance even in the unknown that towers above them. Those who desire to emerge from the ordinary habits of life, from the straitened happiness of mere pleasure-seeking men, must march with deliberate conviction along the path that is known to them, yet never forget the unexplored regions through which this path winds. We must act as though we were masters — as though all things were bound to obey us; and yet let us carefully tend in our soul a thought whose duty it shall be to offer noble submission to the mighty forces we may encounter. It is well that the hand should believe that all is expected, foreseen; but well, too, that we should have in us a secret idea, inviolable, incorruptible, that will always remember that whatever is great most often must

be unforeseen. It is the unforeseen, the unknown, that fulfil what we never should dare to attempt; but they will not come to our aid if they find not, deep down in our heart, an altar inscribed to their worship. Men of the mightiest will — men like Napoleon — were careful, in their most extraordinary deeds, to leave open a good share to fate. Those within whom there lives not a generous hope will keep fate closely confined, as they would a sickly child; but others invite her into the limitless plains man has not yet the strength to explore, and their eyes follow her every movement.

§ 23.

These feverish hours of history resemble a storm that we see on the ocean; we come from far inland: we rush to the beach, in keen expectation; we eye the

enormous waves with curious eagerness, with almost childish intensity. And there comes one along that is three times as high and as fierce as the rest. It rushes towards us like some monster with diaphanous muscles. It uncoils itself in mad haste from the distant horizon, as though it were bearer of some urgent, complete revelation. It ploughs in its wake a track so deep that we feel that the sea must at last be yielding up one of her secrets; but all things happen the same as on a breathless and cloudless day, when languid wavelets roll to and fro in the limpid, fathomless water; from the ocean arises no living thing, not a blade of grass, not a stone.

If aught could discourage the sage — though he is not truly wise whose astonishment is not enlightened, and his interest quickened, by the unforeseen thing that discourages — it would be the discovery, in this French Revolution, of

more than one destiny that is infinitely sadder, more overwhelming, more inexplicable, than that of Louis XVI. I refer to the Girondins: above all, to the admirable Vergniaud. To-day even, though we know all that the future kept hidden from him, and are able to divine what it was that was sought by the instinctive desire of that exceptional century — to-day even it were surely not possible to act more nobly, more wisely, than he. Let fortune hurl any man into the burning centre of a movement that had swept every barrier down, it were surely not possible to reveal a finer character or loftier spirit. Could we fashion, deep down in our heart, out of all that is purest within us, out of all our wisdom and all our love, some beautiful, spotless creature with never a thought of self, without weakness or error — such a being would desire a place by the side of

Vergniaud, on those deserted Convention seats, "whereon the shadow of death seemed already to hover," that he might think as Vergniaud thought, and so speak, and act. He saw the infallible, eternal, that lay the other side of that tragical moment; he knew how to be humane and benevolent still, through all those terrible days when humanity and benevolence seemed the bitterest enemies of the ideal of justice, whereto he had sacrificed all; and in his great and noble doubt he marched bravely onwards, turning neither to right nor to left of him, going infinitely further than seemed to be reasonable, practical, just. The violent death that was not unexpected came towards him, with half his road yet untravelled; to teach us that often in this strange conflict between man and his destiny, the question is not how to save the life of our body, but that of our most beautiful feelings, of our loftiest thoughts.

"Of what avail are my loftiest thoughts if I have ceased to exist?" there are some will ask; to whom others, it may be, will answer, "What becomes of myself if all that I love in my heart and my spirit must die, that my life may be saved?" And are not almost all the morals, and heroism, and virtue of man summed up in that single choice?

§ 24.

But what may this wisdom be that we rate thus highly? Let us not seek to define it too closely; that were but to enchain it. If a man were desirous to study the nature of light, and began by extinguishing all the lights that were near, would not a few cinders, a smouldering wick, be all he would ever discover? And so has it been with those who essayed definition. "The word wise," said Joubert, "when used to a child, is a word that each child understands, and that we need never

explain." Let us accept it even as the child accepts it, that it may grow with our growth. Let us say of wisdom what Sister Hadewijck, the mysterious enemy of Ruijsbroeck the Admirable, said of love: "Its profoundest abyss is its most beautiful form." Wisdom requires no form; her beauty must vary, as varies the beauty of flame. She is no motionless goddess, for ever couched on her throne. She is Minerva who follows us, soars to the skies with us, falls to the earth with us, mingles her tears with our tears, and rejoices when we rejoice. Truly wise you are not unless your wisdom be constantly changing from your childhood on to your death. The more the word means to you, the more beauty and depth it conveys, the wiser must you become; and each step that one takes towards wisdom reveals to the soul ever-widening space, that wisdom never shall traverse.

§ 25.

He who knows himself is wise; yet have we no sooner acquired real consciousness of our being than we learn that true wisdom is a thing that lies far deeper than consciousness. The chief gain of increased consciousness is that it unveils an ever-loftier unconsciousness, on whose heights do the sources lie of the purest wisdom. The heritage of unconsciousness is for all men the same; but it is situate partly within and partly without the confines of normal consciousness. The bulk of mankind will rarely pass over the border; but true lovers of wisdom press on till they open new routes that cross over the frontier. If I love, and my love has procured me the fullest consciousness man may attain, then will an unconsciousness light up this love that shall be quite other than the one whereby commonplace

love is obscured. For this second unconsciousness hedges the animal round, whereas the first draws close unto God; but needs must it lose all trace of the second ere it become aware of itself. In unconsciousness we ever must dwell; but are able to purify, day after day, the unconsciousness that wraps us around.

§ 26.

We shall not become wise through worshipping reason alone; and wisdom means more than perpetual triumph of reason over inferior instincts. Such triumphs can help us but little if our reason be not taught thereby to offer profoundest submission to another and different instinct — that of the soul. These triumphs are precious, because they reveal the presence of diviner instinct, that grows ever diviner still. And

their aim is not in themselves; they serve but to clear the way for the destiny of the soul, which is a destiny, always, of purification and light.

§ 27.

Reason flings open the door to wisdom; but the most living wisdom befinds itself not in reason. Reason bars the gate to malevolent destiny; but wisdom, away on the horizon, throws open another gate to propitious destiny. Reason defends and withdraws; forbids, rejects, and destroys. Wisdom advances, attacks, and adds; increases, creates, and commands. Reason produces not wisdom, which is rather a craving of soul. It dwells up above, far higher than reason; and thus is it of the nature of veritable wisdom to do countless things whereof reason disapproves, or shall but approve hereafter. So was it

that wisdom one day said to reason, It were well to love one's enemies and return good for evil. Reason, that day, tiptoe on the loftiest peak in its kingdom, at last was fain to agree. But wisdom is not yet content, and seeks ever further, alone.

§ 28.

If wisdom obeyed reason only, and sought nothing more than to overcome instinct, then would wisdom be ever the same. There would be but one wisdom for all, and its whole range would be known to man, for reason has more than once explored its entire domain.

Certain fixed points there well may be that are common to all classes of wisdom; but there exists none the less the widest possible difference between the atmospheres that enwrapped the wisdom of Jesus Christ and of Socrates, of Aristides and Marcus Aurelius, of Fénelon and Jean Paul. Let

the same event befall these men on the self-same day: if it fall into the running waters of their wisdom, it will undergo complete transformation, becoming different in every one; if it fall into the stagnant water of their reason, it will remain as it was, unchanged. If Jesus Christ and Socrates both were to meet the adulterous woman, the words that their reason would prompt them to speak would vary but little; but belonging to different worlds would be the working of the wisdom within them, far beyond words and far beyond thoughts. For differences such as these are of the very essence of wisdom. There is but one starting-point for the wise — the threshold of reason. But they separate one from the other as soon as the triumphs of reason are well understood; in other words, as soon as they enter freely the domain of the higher unconsciousness.

§ 29.

To say "this is reasonable" is by no means the same as to say "this is wise." The thing that is reasonable is not of necessity wise, and a thing may be very wise and yet be condemned by over-exacting reason. It is from reason that justice springs, but goodness is born of wisdom; and goodness, we are told by Plutarch, "extends much further than justice." Is it to reason or wisdom that heroism should be ascribed? Wisdom, perhaps, is only the sense of the infinite applied to our moral life. Reason, it is true, has the sense of the infinite also, but dare not do more than accord it bare recognition. It would seem opposed to the very instinct of reason to regard the sense of the infinite as being of importance in life; but wisdom is wise in the measure

that the infinite governs all she procures to be done.

In reason no love can be found — there is much love in wisdom; and all that is highest in wisdom entwines around all that is purest in love. Love is the form most divine of the infinite, and also, because most divine, the form most profoundly human. Why should we not say that wisdom is the triumph of reason divine over reason of man?

§ 30.

We cannot cultivate reason too fully; but by wisdom only should reason be guided. The man is not wise whose reason has not yet been taught to obey the first signal of love. What would Christ, all the heroes, have done had their reason not learned to submit? Is each deed of the hero not always outside

the boundary of reason? and yet, who would venture to say that the hero is not wiser by far than the sluggard who quits not his chair because reason forbids him to rise? Let us say it once more — the vase wherein we should tend the true wisdom is love, and not reason. Reason is found, it is true, at the root-springs of wisdom, yet is wisdom not reason's flower. For we speak not of logical wisdom here, but of wisdom quite other, the favourite sister of love.

Reason and love battle fiercely at first in the soul that begins to expand; but wisdom is born of the peace that at last comes to pass between reason and love; and the peace becomes the profounder as reason yields up still more of her rights to love.

§ 31.

Wisdom is the lamp of love, and love is the oil of the lamp. Love, sinking deeper, grows wiser; and wisdom that springs up aloft comes ever the nearer to love. If you love, you must needs become wise; be wise, and you surely shall love. Nor can any one love with the veritable love but his love must make him the better; and to grow better is but to grow wiser. There is not a man in the world but something improves in his soul from the moment he loves — and that though his love be but vulgar; and those in whom love never dies must needs continue to love as their soul grows nobler and nobler. Love is the food of wisdom; wisdom the food of love; a circle of light within which those who love clasp the hands of those who are wise. Wisdom and love are one; and in Swedenborg's Paradise the wife is "the love of the wisdom of the wise."

§ 32.

"Our reason," said Fénelon, "is derived from the clearness of our ideas." But our wisdom, we might add — in other words, all that is best in our soul and our character, is to be found above all in those ideas that are not yet clear. Were we to allow our clear ideas only to govern our life, we should quickly become undeserving of either much love or esteem. For, truly, what could be less clear than the reasons that bid us be generous, upright, and just; that teach us to cherish in all things the noblest of feelings and thoughts? But it happily so comes to pass that the more clear ideas we possess, the more do we learn to respect those that as yet are still vague. We must strive without ceasing to clarify as many ideas as we can, that we may thus arouse in our soul more and

more that now are obscure. The clear ideas may at times seem to govern our external life, but the others perforce must march on at the head of our intimate life, and the life that we see invariably ends by obeying the invisible life. On the quality, number, and power of our clear ideas do the quality, number, and power depend of those that are vague; and hidden away in the midst of these vague ones, patiently biding their hour, there may well lurk most of the definite truths that we seek with such ardour. Let us not keep them waiting too long; and indeed, a beautiful crystal idea we awaken within us shall not fail, in its turn, to arouse a beautiful vague idea; which last, growing old, and having itself become clear (for is not perfect clearness most often the sign of decrepitude in the idea?), shall also go forth, and disturb from its slumber another obscure idea, but loftier, lovelier far than it had been itself

in its sleep; and thus, it may be, treading gently, one after the other, and never disheartened, in the midst of those silent ranks — some day, by mere chance, a small hand, scarce visible yet, shall touch a great truth.

§ 33.

Clear ideas and obscure ideas; heart, intellect, will, and reason, and soul — truly these words that we use do but mean more or less the same thing: the spiritual riches of man. The soul may well be no more than the most beautiful desire of our brain, and God Himself be only the most beautiful desire of our soul. So great is the darkness here that we can but seek to divide it; and the lines that we trace must be blacker still than the sections they traverse. Of all the ideals that are left to us, there is perhaps only one that we still can accept; and that one is to gain full

self-knowledge; but to how great an extent does this knowledge truly depend on our reason — this knowledge that at first would appear to depend on our reason alone? Surely he who at last had succeeded in realising, to the fullest extent, the place that he filled in the universe — surely he should be better than others, be wiser and truer, more upright; in a word, be more moral? But can any man claim, in good faith, to have grasped this relation; and do not the roots of the most positive morals lie hidden beneath some kind of mystic unconsciousness? Our most beautiful thought does no more than pass through our intelligence; and none would imagine that the harvest must have been reaped in the road because it is seen passing by. When reason, however precise, sets forth to explore her domain, every step that she takes is over the border. And yet is it the intellect that lends the first touches of

beauty to thought; the rest lies not wholly with us; but this rest will not stir into motion until intellect touches the spring. Reason, the well-beloved daughter of intellect, must go take her stand on the threshold of our spiritual life, having first flung open the gates of the prison beneath, where the living, instinctive forces of being lie captive, asleep. She must wait, with the lamp in her hand; and her presence alone shall suffice to ward off from the threshold all that does not yet conform with the nature of light. Beyond, in the regions unlit by her rays, obscure life continues. This troubles her not; indeed, she is glad. . . . She knows that, in the eyes of the God she desires all that has not yet crossed her arcade of light — be it dream, be it thought, even act — can add nothing to, can take nothing from, the ideal creature she is craving to mould. She watches the

flame of her lamp; needs must it burn brightly, and remain at its post, and be seen from afar. She listens, untroubled, to the murmur of inferior instincts out there in the darkness. But the prisoners slowly awake; there are some who draw nigh to the threshold, and their radiance is greater than hers. There flows from them a light less material, softer and purer than that of the bold, hard flame which her hand protects. They are the inscrutable powers of goodness and love; and others follow behind, more mysterious still, and more infinite, seeking admission. What shall she do? If, at the time that she took her stand there on the threshold, she had still lacked the courage to learn that she could not exist alone, then will she be troubled, afraid; she will make fast the gates; and should these be ever reopened, she would find only quivering

cinders at the foot of the gloomy stairs. But if her strength be unshaken; if from all that she could not learn she has learned, at least, that in light there can never be danger, and that reason itself may be freely staked where greater brightness prevails — then shall ineffable changes take place on the threshold, from lamp unto lamp. Drops of an unknown oil will blend with the oil of the wisdom of man; and when the white strangers have passed, the flame of her lamp shall rise higher, transformed for all time; shall shed purer and mightier radiance amidst the columns of the loftier doorway.

§ 34.

So much for isolated wisdom; now let us return to the wisdom that moves to the grave in the midst of the mighty crowd of human destinies; for the

destiny of the sage holds not aloof from that of the wicked and frivolous. All destinies are for ever commingling; and the adventure is rare in whose web the hempen thread blends not with the golden. There are misfortunes more gradual, less frightful of aspect, than those that befell Œdipus and the prince of Elsinore; misfortunes that quail not beneath the gaze of truth or justice or love. Those who speak of the profit of wisdom are never so wise as when they freely admit, without pride or heart-burning, that wisdom grants scarcely a boon to her faithful that the foolish or wicked would prize. And indeed, it may often take place that the sage, as he moves among men, shall pass almost unnoticed, shall affect them but slightly; be this that his stay is too brief, that he comes too late, that he misses true contact; or perchance that he has to contend with forces

too overwhelming, amassed by myriad men from time immemorial. No miracles can he perform on material things; he can save only that which life's ordinary laws still allow to be saved; and himself, it may be, shall be suddenly seized in a great inexorable whirlwind. But, though he perish therein, still does he escape the fate that is common to most; for at least he will die without having been forced — for weeks, or it may be for years, before the catastrophe — to be the helpless, despairing witness of the ruin of his soul. And to save some one — if we admit that in life there are truly two lives — does not of necessity mean that we save him from death and disaster; but indeed that we render him happier, inasmuch as we try to improve him. Moral salvation is the greatest salvation; and yet, what a trifle this seems, as everything seems that is done on the loftiest summits of soul.

Was the penitent thief not saved; and that not alone in the Christian sense of the word, but in its fullest, most perfect meaning? Still had he to die, and at that very hour; but he died eternally happy; because at the very last moment he too had been loved, and a Being of infinite wisdom had declared that his soul had not been without value; that his soul, too, had been good, and had not passed through the world unperceived of all men.

§ 35

As we go deeper down into life we discover the secret of more and more sorrow and helplessness. We see that many souls round us lead idle and foolish lives, because they believe they are useless, unnoticed by all, unloved, and convinced they have nothing within them that is worthy of love. But to the sage the hour

must come when every soul that exists claims his glance, his approval, his love — if only because it possesses the mysterious gift of existence. The hour must come when he sees that falsehood and weakness and vice are but on the surface; when his eye shall pierce through, and discover the strength, and the truth, and the virtue that lie underneath. Happy and blessed hour, when wickedness stands forth revealed as goodness bereft of its guide; and treachery is seen to be loyalty, for ever astray from the highway of happiness; and hatred becomes only love, in poignant despair, that is digging its grave. Then, unsuspected of any, shall it be with all those who are near the good man as it was with the penitent thief; into the humblest soul that will thus have been saved by a look, or a word, or a silence, shall the true happiness fall — the happiness fate cannot touch; that brings to all men the oblivion

it gave unto Socrates, and causes each one to forget, until nightfall, that the death-giving cup had been drained ere the sun went down.

§ 36.

The inner life, perhaps, is not what we deem it to be. There are as many kinds of inner lives as there are of external lives. Into these tranquil regions the smallest may enter as readily as he who is greatest, for the gate that leads thither is not always the gate of the intellect. It often may happen that the man of vast knowledge shall knock at this gate in vain, reply being made from within by the man who knows nothing. The inner life that is surest, most lasting, possessed of the uttermost beauty, must needs be the one that consciousness slowly erects in itself, with the aid of all that is purest in the soul. And he is wise who has learned that this life should be

nourished on every event of the day: he to whom deceit or betrayal serves but to enhance his wisdom: he in whom evil itself becomes fuel for the flame of love. He is wise who at last sees in suffering only the light that it sheds on his soul; and whose eyes never rest on the shadow it casts upon those who have sent it towards him. And wiser still is the man to whom sorrow and joy not only bring increase of consciousness, but also the knowledge that something exists superior to consciousness even. To have reached this point is to reach the summit of inward life, whence at last we look down on the flames whose light has helped our ascent. But not many can climb so high; and happiness may be achieved in the less ardent valley below, where the flames spring darkly to life. And there are existences still more obscure which yet have their places of refuge. There are some that instinctively fashion

inward lives for themselves. There are some that, bereft of initiative or of intelligence, never discover the path that leads into themselves, and are never aware of all that their refuge contains; and yet will their actions be wholly the same as the actions of those whose intellect weighs every treasure. There are some who desire only good, though they know not wherefore they desire it, and have no suspicion that goodness is the one fixed star of loftiest consciousness. The inner life begins when the soul becomes good, and not when the intellect ripens. It is somewhat strange that this inner life can never be formed out of evil. No inner life is for him whose soul is bereft of all nobleness. He may have full knowledge of self; he may know, it may be, wherefore he shuns goodness; and yet shall he seek in vain for the refuge, the strength, the treasure of invisible gladness, that form

the possessions of him who can fearlessly enter his heart. For the inward life is built up of a certain rejoicing of soul; and the soul can never be happy if it possess not, and love not, something that is pure. It may perhaps err in its choice, but then even will it be happier than the soul to which it has never been given to choose.

§ 37.

And thus are we truly saving a man if we bring it about that he loves evil somewhat less than he loved it before; for we are helping that man to construct, deep down in his soul, the refuge whereagainst destiny shall brandish her weapons in vain. This refuge is the monument of consciousness, or, it may be, of love; for love is nothing but consciousness, still vaguely in search of itself; and veritable

consciousness nothing but love that at last has emerged from the shadow. And it is in the deepest recess of this refuge that the soul shall kindle the wondrous fire of her joy. And this joy of the soul is like unto no other joy; and even as material fire will chase away deadly disease from the earth, so will the joy of the soul scatter sorrow that malevolent destiny brings. It arises not from exterior happiness; it arises not from satisfied self-love; for the joy that self-love procures becomes less as the soul becomes nobler, but the joy of pure love increases as nobility comes to the soul. Nor is this joy born of pride; for to be able to smile at its beauty is not enough to bring joy to the soul. The soul that has sought in itself has the right to know of its beauty; but to brood on this beauty too much, to become over-conscious thereof, were perhaps to detract somewhat from the unconsciousness of its

love. The joy that I speak of takes not from love what it adds unto consciousness; for in this joy, and in this joy alone, do consciousness and love become one, feeding each on the other, each gaining from that which it gives. The striving intellect may well know happiness beyond the reach of the satisfied body; but the soul that grows nobler has joys that are often denied to the striving intellect. These two will often unite and labour together at building the house within. But still it will happen at times that both work apart, and widely different then are the structures each will erect. And were this to be so, and the being I loved best of all in the world came and asked me which he should choose — which refuge I held to be most unattackable, sweetest, profoundest — I would surely advise him to shelter his destiny in the refuge of the soul that grows nobler.

§ 38.

Is the sage never to suffer? Shall no storm ever break on the roof of his dwelling, no traps be laid to ensnare him? Shall wife and friends never fail him? Must his father not die, and his mother, his brothers, his sons — must all these not die like the rest? Shall angels stand guard at each highway through which sorrow can pass into man? Did not Christ Himself weep as He stood before Lazarus' tomb? Had not Marcus Aurelius to suffer — from Commodus, the son who already showed signs of the monster he was to become; from Faustina, the wife whom he loved, but who cared not for him? Was not destiny's hand laid heavy on Paulus Æmilius, who was fully as wise as Timoleon? did not both his sons die, one five days before his

triumph in Rome, and the other but three days after? What becomes of the refuge, then, where wisdom keeps watch over happiness? Must we take back all we have said? and is wisdom yet one more illusion, by whose aid the soul would fain conciliate reason, and justify cravings that experience is sure to reject as being opposed to reason?

§ 39.

Nay, in truth, the sage too must suffer. He suffers; and suffering forms a constituent part of his wisdom. He will suffer, perhaps, more than most men, for that his nature is far more complete. And being nearer to all mankind, as the wise ever must be, his suffering will be but the greater, for the sorrows of others are his. He will suffer in his flesh, in his heart, in his spirit; for there are sides in all these

that no wisdom on earth can dispute against destiny. And so he accepts his suffering, but is not discouraged thereby; not for him are the chains that it fastens on those who cringe down before it, unaware that it is but a messenger sent by a mightier personage, whom a bend in the road hides from view. Needs must the sage, like his neighbour, be startled from sleep by the shouts of the truculent envoy, by the blows at the door that cause the whole house to tremble. He, too, must go down and parley. But yet, as he listens, his eyes are not fixed on this bringer of evil tidings; his glance will at times be lifted over the messenger's shoulder, will scan the dust on the horizon in search of the mighty idea that perhaps may be near at hand. And indeed, when our thoughts rest on fate, at such times as happiness enfolds us, we feel that no great misfortune can be suddenly burst upon us. The proportions

will change, it is true, when the blow falls; but it is equally true that before the misfortune can wholly destroy the abiding courage within us, it first must triumph in our heart over all we adore, over all we admire, and love. And what alien power can expel from our soul a feeling and thought that we hurl not ourselves from its throne? Physical suffering apart, not a single sorrow exists that can touch us except through our thoughts; and whence do our thoughts derive the weapons wherewith they attack or defend us? We suffer but little from suffering itself; but from the manner wherein we accept it overwhelming sorrow may spring. "His unhappiness was caused by himself," said a thinker of one whose eyes never looked over the brutal messenger's shoulder — "his unhappiness was caused by himself; for all misery is inward, and caused by ourselves. We are wrong in believing that it comes

from without. For indeed we create it within us, out of our very substance."

§ 40.

It is only in the manner of our facing the event that its active force consists. Assemble ten men who, like Paulus Æmilius, have lost both their sons at the moment when life seemed sweetest, then will the misfortune appear to vary in every one. Misfortune enters within us, but must of necessity yield obedience to all our commands. Even as the order may be that it finds inscribed on the threshold, so will it sow, or destroy, or reap. If my neighbour, a commonplace man, were to lose his two sons at the moment when fate had granted his dearest desires, then would darkness steal over all, unrelieved by a glimmer of light; and misfortune itself, contemptuous of its too

facile success, would leave naught behind but a handful of colourless cinders. Nor is it necessary for me to see my neighbour again to be aware that his sorrow will have brought to him pettiness only; for sorrow does merely restore to us that which our soul had lent in happier days.

§ 41.

But this was the misfortune that befell Paulus Æmilius. Rome, still aglow with his triumph, waited, dismayed, wondering what was to happen. Were the gods defying the sage, and how would the sage reply? Would the hero be crushed by his sorrow, or would sorrow acknowledge its master? Mankind, at moments like these, seems aware that destiny is yet once again making trial of the strength of her arm, and that change of some kind must befall if her blow crush not where it

alights. And see with what eagerness men at such moments will question the eyes of their chiefs for the password against the invisible.

But Paulus Æmilius has gathered together an assembly of the people of Rome; he advances gravely towards them, and thus does he speak: "I, who never yet feared anything that was human, have, amongst such as were divine, always had a dread of fortune as faithless and inconstant; and, for the very reason that in this war she had been as a favourable gale in all my affairs, I still expected some change and reflux of things. In one day I passed the Ionian Sea, and reached Corcyra from Brundisium; thence in five more I sacrificed at Delphi, and in other five days came to my forces in Macedonia, where, after I had finished the usual sacrifices for the purifying of the army, I entered on my duties, and in the space of fifteen days

put an honourable period to the war. Still retaining a jealousy of fortune, even from the smooth current of my affairs, and seeing myself secure and free from the danger of any enemy, I chiefly dreaded the change of the goddess at sea, whilst conveying home my victorious army, vast spoils, and a captive king. Nay, indeed, after I was returned to you safe, and saw the city full of joy, congratulating, and sacrifices, yet still I distrusted, well knowing that fortune never conferred any great benefits that were unmixed and unattended with probabilities of reverse. Nor could my mind, that was still as it were in labour, and always foreseeing something to befall this city, free itself from this fear, until this great misfortune befell me in my own family, and till, in the midst of those days set apart for triumph, I carried two of the best of sons, my only destined successors, one after another to their funerals. Now,

therefore, I am myself safe from danger, at least as to what was my greatest care; and I trust and am verily persuaded that, for the time to come, fortune will prove constant and harmless unto you; since she has sufficiently wreaked her jealousy at our great successes on me and mine, and has made the conqueror as marked an example of human instability as the captive whom he led in triumph, with this only difference, that Perseus, though conquered, does yet enjoy his children, while the conqueror Æmilius is deprived of his."

§ 42.

This was the Roman fashion of accepting the greatest sorrow that can befall a man at the moment when sorrow is felt the most keenly — at the moment of his greatest happiness. And there are many ways of accepting misfortune — as

many, indeed, as there are generous feelings or thoughts to be found on the earth; and every one of those thoughts, every one of those feelings, has a magic wand that transforms, on the threshold, the features and vestments of sorrow. Job would have said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord"; and Marcus Aurelius perhaps, "If it be no longer allowed me to love those I loved high above all, it is doubtless that I may learn to love those whom I love not yet."

§ 43.

And let us not think that these are mere empty words wherewith they console themselves, words that in vain seek to hide the wound that bleeds but the more for the effort. But if it were so, if empty words could console, that surely

were better than to be bereft of all consolation. And further, if we have to admit that all this is illusion, must we not, in mere justice, also admit that illusion is the solitary thing that the soul can possess; and in the name of what other illusion shall we venture to rate this illusion so lightly? Ah, when the night falls and the great sages I speak of go back to their lonely dwelling, and look on the chairs round the hearth where their children once were, but never shall be again — then, truly, can they not escape some part of the sorrow that comes, overwhelming, to those whose suffering no noble thought chastens. For it were wrong to attribute to beautiful feeling and thought a virtue they do not possess. There are external tears that they cannot restrain; there are holy hours when wisdom cannot yet console. But, for the last time let us say it, suffering we cannot

avoid, for suffering there ever must be; still does it rest with ourselves to choose what our suffering shall bring. And let us not think that this choice, which the eye cannot see, is truly a very small matter, and helpless to comfort a sorrow whose cause the eyes never cease to behold. Out of small matters like these are all moral joys built up, and these are profounder far than intellectual or physical joys. Translate into words the feeling that spurs on the hero, and how trivial it seems! Insignificant too does the idea of duty appear that Cato the younger had formed, when compared with the enormous disturbance it caused in a mighty empire, or the terrible death it brought on. And yet, was not Cato's idea far greater than the disturbance, or death, that ensued? Do we not feel, even now, that Cato was right? And was not his life rendered truly and nobly happy, thanks to this very

idea, that the reason of man will not even consider, so unreasonable does it appear? All that ennobles our life, all that we respect in ourselves, the mainsprings of our virtue, the limits that feeling will even impose upon vices or crimes — all these appear veriest trifles when viewed by the cold eye of reason; and yet do they fashion the laws that govern every man's life. Would life be endurable if we did not obey many truths that our reason rejects? The wretchedest even obeys one of these; and the more truths there are that he yields to, the less wretched does he become. The assassin will tell you, "I murder, it is true, but at least do not steal." And he who has stolen steals, but does not betray; and he who betrays would at least not betray his brother. And thus does each one cling for refuge to his last fragment of spiritual beauty. No man can have fallen so low but he still has a retreat

in his soul, where he ever shall find a few drops of pure water, and be girt up anew with the strength that he needs to go on with his life. For here again reason is helpless, unable to comfort; she must halt on the threshold of the thief's last asylum, even as she must halt on the threshold of Job's resignation, of the love of Marcus Aurelius, of the sacrifice made by Antigone. She halts, is bewildered, she does not approve; and yet knows full well that to rise in revolt were only to combat the light whereof she is shadow; for amidst all this she is but as one who stands with the sun full upon him. His shadow is there at his feet; as he moves, it will follow; as he rises or stoops, its outline will alter; but this shadow is all he commands, that he masters, possesses, of the dazzling light that enfolds him. And so has reason her being, too, beneath a superior light, and

the shadow cannot affect the calm, unvarying splendour. Far distant as Marcus Aurelius may be from the traitor, it is still from the selfsame well that they both draw the holy water that freshens their soul; and this well is not to be found in the intellect. For, strangely enough, it is not in our reason that moral life has its being; and he who would let reason govern his life would be the most wretched of men. There is not a virtue, a beautiful thought, or a generous deed, but has most of its roots hidden far away from that which can be understood or explained. Well might man be proud could he trace every virtue, and joy, and his whole inward life, to the one thing he truly possesses, the one thing on which he can depend — in a word, to his reason. But do what he will, the smallest event that arrives will quickly convince him that reason is wholly unable to offer him

shelter; for in truth we are beings quite other than merely reasonable creatures.

§ 44.

But if it be not our reason that chooses what suffering shall bring us, whereby is the choice then made? By the life we have lived till then, the life that has moulded our soul. Wisdom matures but slowly; her fruits shall not quickly be gathered. If my life has not been as that of Paulus Æmilius, there shall be no comfort for me in the thoughts whereby he was consoled, not though every sage in the world were to come and repeat them to me. The angels that dry our eyes bear the form and the features of all we have said and thought — above all, of what we have done, prior to the hour of misfortune. When Thomas Carlyle (a sage, although somewhat morbid) lost the wife he had

tenderly loved, with whom he had lived forty years, then did his sorrow too, with marvellous exactness, become as had been the bygone life of his love. And therefore was this sorrow of his majestic and vast; consoling and torturing alike in the midst of his self-reproach, his regret, and his tenderness — as might be meditation or prayer on the shore of a gloomy sea. In the sorrow that floods our heart we have, as it were, a synthetic presentment of all the days that are gone; and as these were, so shall our sorrow be poignant, or tender and gentle. If there be in my life no noble or generous deeds that memory can bring back to me, then, at the inevitable moment when memory melts into tears, must these tears, too, be bereft of all that is generous or noble. For tears in themselves have no colour, that they may the better reflect the past life of our soul; and this reflection becomes our chastisement

or our reward. There is but one thing that never can turn into suffering, and that is the good we have done. When we lose one we love, our bitterest tears are called forth by the memory of hours when we loved not enough. If we always had smiled on the one who is gone, there would be no despair in our grief; and some sweetness would cling to our tears, reminiscent of virtues and happiness. For our recollections of veritable love — which indeed is the act of virtue containing all others — call from our eyes the same sweet, tender tears as those most beautiful hours wherein memory was born. Sorrow is just, above all; and even as the cast stands ready awaiting the molten bronze, so is our whole life expectant of the hour of sorrow, for it is then we receive our wage.

§ 45.

Here, standing close to the mightiest pillar of destiny's throne, we may see once again how restricted her power becomes on such as surpass her in wisdom. For she is barbarian still, and many men tower above her. The commonplace life still supplies her with weapons, which today are old-fashioned and crude. Her mode of attack, in exterior life, is as it always has been, as it was in Œdipus' days. She shoots like a blear-eyed bowman, aiming straight ahead of her; but if the target be raised somewhat higher than usual, her arrows fall harmless to earth.

Suffering, sorrow, tears, regrets — these words, that vary so slightly in meaning, are names that we give to emotions which in no two men are alike. If we probe to the heart of these words, these emotions,

we find they are only the track that is left by our faults; and there where these faults were noble (for there are noble faults as there are mean or trivial virtues) our sorrow will be nearer akin to veritable happiness than the happiness of those whose consciousness still is confined within narrowest limits. Would Carlyle have desired to exchange the magnificent sorrow that flooded his soul, and blossomed so tenderly there, for the conjugal joys, superficial and sunless, of his happiest neighbour in Chelsea? And was not Ernest Renan's grief, when Henriette, his sister, died, more grateful to the soul than the absence of grief in the thousands of others who have no love to give to a sister? Shall our pity go forth to him who, at times, will weep on the shore of an infinite sea, or to the other who smiles all his life, without cause, alone in his little room? "Happiness, sorrow" — could we only

escape from ourselves for one instant and taste of the hero's sadness, would there be many content to return to their own superficial delights?

Do happiness and sorrow, then, only exist in ourselves, and that even when they seem to come from without? All that surrounds us will turn to angel or devil, according as our heart may be. Joan of Arc held communion with saints, Macbeth with witches, and yet were the voices the same. The destiny whereat we murmur may be other, perhaps, than we think. She has only the weapons we give her; she is neither just nor unjust, nor does it lie in her province to deliver sentence on man. She whom we take to be goddess is a disguised messenger only, come very simply to warn us on certain days of our life that the hour has sounded at last when we needs must judge ourselves.

§ 46.

Men of inferior degree, it is true, are not given to judging themselves, and therefore is it that fate passes judgment upon them. They are the slaves of a destiny of almost unvarying sternness, for it is only when man has been judged by himself that destiny can be transformed. Men such as these will not master, or alter within them, the event that they meet; nay, they themselves become morally transformed by the very first thing that draws near them. If misfortune befall them, they grovel before it and stoop down to its level; and misfortune, with them, would seem always to wear its poorest and commonest aspect. They see the finger of fate in every least thing that may happen — be it choice of profession, a friendship that greets them,

a woman who passes, and smiles. To them chance and destiny always are one; but chance will be seldom propitious if accepted as destiny. Hostile forces at once take possession of all that is vacant within us, nor filled by the strength of our soul; and whatever is void in the heart or the mind becomes a fountain of fatal influence. The Margaret of Goethe and Ophelia of Shakespeare had perforce to yield meekly to fate, for they were so feeble that each gesture they witnessed seemed fate's own gesture to them. But yet, had they only possessed some fragment of Antigone's strength — the Antigone of Sophocles — would they not then have transformed the destinies of Hamlet and Faust as well as their own? And if Othello had taken Corneille's Pauline to wife and not Desdemona, would Desdemona's destiny then, all else remaining unchanged, have dared to come within

reach of the enlightened love of Pauline? Where was it, in body or soul, that grim fatality lurked? And though the body may often be powerless to add to its strength, can this ever be true of the soul? Indeed, the more that we think of it, the clearer does it become that there could be one destiny only that might truly be said to triumph over man, the one that might have the power loudly to cry unto all, "From this day onward there shall come no more strength to thy soul, neither strength nor ennoblement." But is there a destiny in the world empowered to hold such language?

§ 47.

And yet virtue often is chastised, and the advent of misfortune hastened, by the soul's very strength; for the greater our love may be, the greater the surface

becomes we expose to majestic sorrow; wherefore none the less does the sage never cease his endeavours to enlarge this beautiful surface. Yes, it must be admitted, destiny is not always content to crouch in the darkness; her ice-cold hands will at times go prowling in the light, and seize on more beautiful victims. The tragic name of Antigone has already escaped me; and there will, doubtless, be many will say, "She surely fell victim to destiny, all her great force notwithstanding; and is she not the instance we long have been seeking in vain?" It cannot be gainsaid: Antigone fell into the hands of the ruthless goddess, for the reason that there lay in her soul three times the strength of any ordinary woman. She died; for fate had contrived it so that she had to choose between death and what seemed to her a sister's imperative duty. She suddenly found herself wedged

between death and love — love of the purest and most disinterested kind, its object being a shade she would never behold on earth. And if destiny thus was enabled to lure her into the murderous angle that duty and death had formed, it was only because her soul, that was loftier far than the soul of the others, saw, stretching before it, the insurmountable barrier of duty — that her poor sister Ismene could not see, even when it was shown her. And, at that moment, as they both stood there on the threshold of the palace, the same voices spoke to them; Antigone listening only to the voice from above, wherefore she died; Ismene unconscious of any save that which came from below — and she lived. But instil into Antigone's soul something of the weakness that paralysed Ophelia and Margaret, would destiny then have thought it of service to beckon to

death as the daughter of Œdipus issued from the doorway of Creon's palace? It was, therefore, solely because of the strength of her soul that destiny was able to triumph. And, indeed, it is this that consoles the wise and the just — the heroes; destiny can vanquish them only by the good she compels them to do. Other men are like cities with hundred gates, that she finds unguarded and open; but the upright man is a fortified city, with the one gate only — of light; and this gate remains closed till love be induced to knock, and to crave admission. Other men she compels to obey her; and destiny, doing her will, wills nothing but evil; but would she subdue the upright, she needs must desire noble acts. Darkness then will no longer enwrap her approach. The upright man is secure in the light that enfolds him; and only by a light more radiant still can she hope to prevail.

Destiny then will become more beautiful still than her victim. Ordinary men she will place between personal sorrow and the misfortune of others; but to master the hero or saint, she must cause him to choose between the happiness of others and the grief that shall fall on himself. Ordinary men she lays siege to with the aid of all that is ugly; against the others she perforce must enlist whatever is noblest on earth. Against the first she has thousands of weapons, the very stones in the road becoming engines of mischief; but the others she can only attack with one irresistible sword, the gleaming sword of duty and truth. In Antigone's story is found the whole tale of destiny's empire on wisdom. Jesus who died for us, Curtius who leaped into the gulf, Socrates who refused to desist from his teaching, the sister of charity who yields up her life to tending the sick, the humble wayfarer

who perishes seeking to rescue his fellows from death — all these have been forced to choose, all these bear the mark of Antigone's glorious wound on their breast. For truly those who live in the light have their magnificent perils also; and wisdom has danger for such as shrink from self-sacrifice, though it may be that they who shrink from self-sacrifice are perhaps not very wise.

§ 48.

Pronounce the word "destiny," and in the minds of all men an image arises of gloom and of terror — of death. In their thoughts they regard it, instinctively, as the lane that leads straight to the tomb. Most often, indeed, it is only the name that they give unto death, when its hand is not visible yet. It is death that looms in the future, the shadow of death upon life.

Wisdom and Destiny

"None can escape his destiny" we often exclaim when we hear of death lying in wait for the traveller at the bend of the road. But were the traveller to encounter happiness instead, we would never ascribe this to destiny; if we did, we should have in our mind a far different goddess. And yet, are not joys to be met with on the highways of life that are greater than any misfortune, more momentous even than death? May a happiness not be encountered that the eye cannot see? and is it not of the nature of happiness to be less manifest than misfortune, to become ever less apparent to the eye as it reaches loftier heights? But to this we refuse to pay heed. The whole village, the town, will flock to the spot where some wretched adventure takes place; but there are none will pause for an instant and let their eyes rest on a kiss, or a vision of beauty that gladdens the soul, a ray

of love that illumines the heart. And yet may the kiss be productive of joy no less great than the pain that follows a wound. We are unjust; we never associate destiny with happiness; and if we do not regard it as being inseparable from death, it is only to connect it with disaster even greater than death itself.

§ 49.

Were I to refer to the destiny of Œdipus, Joan of Arc, Agamemnon, you would give not a thought to their lives, but only behold the last moments of all, the pathway of death. You would stoutly maintain that their destiny was of the saddest, for that their end was sad. You forget, however, that death can never be happy; but nevertheless it is thus we are given to judging of life. It is as though death swallowed all; and

should accident suddenly end thirty years of unclouded joy, the thirty years would be hidden away from our eyes by the gloom of one sorrowful hour.

§ 50.

It is wrong to think of destiny only in connection with death and disaster. When shall we cease to believe that death, and not life, is important; that misfortune is greater than happiness? Why, when we try to sum up a man's destiny, keep our eyes fixed only on the tears that he shed, and never on the smiles of his joy? Where have we learned that death fixes the value of life, and not life that of death? We deplore the destiny of Socrates, Duncan, Antigone, and many others whose lives were noble; we deplore their destiny because their end was sudden and cruel; and we are fain to admit that

misfortune prevails over wisdom and virtue alike. But, first of all, you yourself are neither just nor wise if you seek in wisdom and justice aught else but wisdom and justice alone. And further, what right have we thus to sum up an entire existence in the one hour of death? Why conclude, from the fact that Socrates and Antigone met with unhappy ends, that it was their wisdom or virtue brought unhappiness to them? Does death occupy more space in life than birth? Yet do you not take the sage's birth into account as you ponder over his destiny. Happiness or unhappiness arises from all that we do from the day of our birth to the day of our death; and it is not in death, but indeed in the days and the years that precede it, that we can discover a man's true happiness or sorrow — in a word, his destiny. We seem to imagine that the sage, whose terrible death is written in history, spent

all his life in sad anticipation of the end his wisdom prepared; whereas in reality the thought of death troubles the wise far less than it troubles the wicked. Socrates had far less cause than Macbeth to dread an unhappy end. And unhappy as his death may have been, it at least had not darkened his life; he had not spent all his days in dying preliminary deaths, as did the Thane of Cawdor. But it is difficult for us not to believe that a wound, that bleeds a few hours, must crumble away into nothingness all the peace of a lifetime.

§ 51.

I do not pretend that destiny is just, that it rewards the good and punishes the wicked. What soul that were sure of reward could ever claim to be good? But we are less just than destiny even,

when it is destiny that we judge. Our eyes see only the sage's misfortune, for misfortune is known to us all; but we see not his happiness, for to understand the happiness of the wise and the just whose destinies we endeavour to gauge, we must needs be possessed of wisdom and justice that shall be fully equal to theirs. When a man of inferior soul endeavours to estimate a great sage's happiness, this happiness flows through his fingers like water; yet is it heavy as gold, and as brilliant as gold, in the hand of a brother sage. For to each is the happiness given that he can best understand. The sage's misfortune may often resemble the one that befalls other men; but his happiness has nothing in common with that which he who is not wise terms happiness. In happiness there are far more regions unknown than there are in misfortune. The voice of misfortune is

ever the same; happiness becomes the more silent as it penetrates deeper.

When we put our misfortunes into one scale of the balance, each of us lays, in the other, all that he deems to be happiness. The savage flings feathers, and powder, and alcohol into the scale; civilised men some gold, a few days of delirium; but the sage will deposit therein countless things our eyes cannot see — all his soul, it may be, and even the misfortune that he will have purified.

§ 52.1

There is nothing in all the world more just than happiness, nothing that will more faithfully adopt the form of our soul, or so carefully fill the space that our wisdom flings open. Yet is it most silent of all that there is in the world. The Angel of Sorrow can speak every language — there is not a word but she knows; but the lips

of the Angel of Happiness are sealed, save when she tells of the savage's joys. It is hundreds of centuries past that misfortune was cradled, but happiness seems even now to have scarcely emerged from its infancy. There are some men have learned to be happy; why are there none whose great gladness has urged them to lift up their voice in the name of the silent Archangel who has flooded their soul with light? Are we not almost teaching happiness if we do only speak of it; invoking it, if we let no day pass without pronouncing its name? And is it not the first duty of those who are happy to tell of their gladness to others? All men can learn to be happy; and the teaching of it is easy. If you live among those who daily call blessing on life, it shall not be long ere you will call blessing on yours. Smiles are as catching as tears; and periods men have termed happy, were periods when

there existed some who knew of their happiness. Happiness rarely is absent; it is we that know not of its presence. The greatest felicity avails us nothing if we know not that we are happy; there is more joy in the smallest delight whereof we are conscious, than in the approach of the mightiest happiness that enters not into our soul. There are only too many who think that what they have cannot be happiness; and therefore is it the duty of such as are happy, to prove to the others that they only possess what each man possesses deep down in the depths of his heart. To be happy is only to have freed one's soul from the unrest of happiness. It were well if, from time to time, there should come to us one to whom fortune had granted a dazzling, superhuman felicity, that all men regarded with envy; and if he were very simply to say to us, " All is mine that

you pray for each day: I have riches, and youth, and health; I have glory, and power, and love; and if to-day I am truly able to call myself happy, it is not on account of the gifts that fortune has deigned to accord me, but because I have learned from these gifts to fix my eyes far above happiness. If my marvellous travels and victories, my strength and my love, have brought me the peace and the gladness I sought, it is only because they have taught me that it is not in them that the veritable gladness and peace can be found. It was in myself they existed, before all these triumphs; and still in myself are they now, after all my achievement; and I know full well that had but a little more wisdom been mine, I might have enjoyed all I now enjoy without the aid of so much good fortune. I know that to-day I am happier still than I was yesterday, because I have learned at last

that I stand in no need of good fortune in order to free my soul, to bring peace to my thoughts, to enlighten my heart."

§ 53.

Of this the sage is fully aware, though no superhuman happiness may have descended upon him. The upright man knows it too, though he be less wise than the sage, and his consciousness less fully developed; for an act of goodness or justice brings with it a kind of inarticulate consciousness that often becomes more effective, more faithful, more loving, than the consciousness that springs into being from the very deepest thought. Acts of this nature bring, above all, a special knowledge of happiness. Strive as we may, our loftiest thoughts are always uncertain, unstable; but the light of a goodly deed shines steadily on, and is lasting.

There are times when deep thought is no more than merely fictitious consciousness; but an act of charity, the heroic duty fulfilled — these are true consciousness; in other words, happiness in action. The happiness of Marcus Aurelius, who condones a mortal affront; of Washington, giving up power when he feared that his glory was leading his people astray — the happiness of these will differ by far from that of some mean-souled, venomous creature who might (if such a thing may be assumed) by mere chance have discovered some extraordinary natural law. Long is the road that leads from the satisfied brain to the heart at rest, and only such joys will flourish there as are proof against winter's storms. Happiness is a plant that thrives far more readily in moral than in intellectual life. Consciousness — the consciousness of happiness, above all — will not choose the

intellect as a hiding-place for the treasure it holds most dear. At times it would almost seem as if all that is loftiest in intellect, fraught with most comfort, is transformed into consciousness only when passed through an act of virtue. It suffices not to discover new truths in the world of thought or of fact. For ourselves, a truth only lives from the moment it modifies, purifies, sweetens something we have in our soul. To be conscious of moral improvement is of the essence of consciousness. Some beings there are, of vigorous intellect, whose intellect never is used to discover a fault, or foster a feeling of charity. And this happens often with women. In cases where a man and a woman have equal intellectual power, the woman will always devote far less of this power to acquiring moral self-knowledge. And truly the intellect that aims not at consciousness is but beating

its wings in the void. Loss and corruption needs must ensue if the force of our brain be not at once gathered up in the purest vase of our heart. Nor can such an intellect ever know happiness; nay, it seems to invite misfortune. For intellect may be of the loftiest, mightiest, and yet perhaps never draw near unto joy; but in the soul that is gentle, and pure, and good, sorrow cannot for ever abide. And even though the boundary line between intellect and consciousness be not always as clearly defined as here we seem to assume, even though a beautiful thought in itself may be often a goodly action — yet, none the less will a beautiful thought, that springs not from noble deed, or wherefrom noble deed shall not spring, add but little unto our felicity; whereas a good deed, though it father no thought, will ever fall like soft bountiful rain on our knowledge of happiness.

§ 54.

"How final must his farewell to happiness have been," exclaims Renan, speaking of the renouncement of Marcus Aurelius—"how final must his farewell to happiness have been, for him to be capable of such excess! None will ever know how great was the suffering of that poor, stricken heart, or the bitterness the waxen brow concealed, calm always, and even smiling. It is true that the farewell to happiness is the beginning of wisdom, and the surest road to happiness. There is nothing sweeter than the return of joy that follows the renouncement of joy, as there is nothing more exquisite, of keener, deeper delight, than the enchantment of the disenchanted."

In these terms does a sage describe a sage's happiness; but is it true that the

happiness of Marcus Aurelius, as of Renan himself, arose only from the return of joy that followed the renouncement of joy, and from the enchantment of the disenchanted? For then were it better that wisdom be less, that we be the less disenchanted. But what can the wisdom desire that declares itself thus disenchanted? Was it not truth that it sought? and is there a truth that can stifle the love of truth in the depths of a loyal heart? The truth that has taught you that man is wicked and nature unjust; that justice is futile, and love without power, has indeed taught you nothing if it have not at the same time revealed a truth that is greater still, one that throws on these disillusions a light more brilliant, more ample, than the myriad flickering beams it has quenched all around you. For there lurks unspeakable pride, and pride of the poorest kind, in thus

declaring ourselves satisfied because we can find satisfaction in nothing that is. Such satisfaction, in truth, is discontent only, too sluggish to lift its head; and they only are discontented who no longer would understand.

Does not the man who conceives it his duty to forswear all happiness renounce something as well that, as yet, has not turned into happiness? And besides, what are the joys to which we bid this somewhat affected farewell? It must surely be right to discard all happiness injurious to others; but happiness that injures others will not long wear the semblance of happiness in the eyes of the sage. And when his wisdom at length has revealed the profounder joys, will it not be in all unconsciousness that he renounces those of lesser worth?

Let us never put faith in the wisdom or gladness that is based on contempt of

a single existing thing; for contempt and renouncement, its sickly offspring, offer asylum to none but the weak and the aged. We have only the right to scorn a joy when such scorn is wholly unconscious. But so long as we listen to the voice of contempt or renouncement, so long as we suffer these to flood our heart with bitterness, so long must the joy we discard be a joy that we still desire.

We must beware lest there enter our soul certain parasitic virtues. And renouncement, often, is only a parasite. Even if it do not enfeeble our inward life, it must inevitably bring disquiet. Just as bees cease from work at the approach of an intruder into their hive, so will the virtues and strength of the soul into which contempt or renouncement has entered, forsake all their tasks, and eagerly flock round the curious guest

that has come in the wake of pride; for so long as renouncement be conscious, so long will the happiness found therein have its origin truly in pride. And he who is bent on renouncement had best, first of all, forswear the delights of pride, for these are wholly vain and wholly deceptive.

§ 55.

Within reach of all, demanding neither boldness nor energy, is this "enchantment of the disenchanted!" But what name shall we give to the man who renounces that which brought happiness to him, and rather would surely lose it to-day than live in fear lest fortune haply deprive him thereof on the morrow? Is the mission of wisdom only to peer into the uncertain future, with ear on the stretch for the footfall of sorrow that

never may come — but deaf to the whirr of the wings of the happiness that fills all space?

Let us not look to renouncement for happiness till we have sought it elsewhere in vain. It is easy to be wise if we be content to regard as happiness the void that is left by the absence of happiness. But it was not for unhappiness the sage was created; and it is more glorious, as well as more human, to be happy and still to be wise. The supreme endeavour of wisdom is only to seek in life for the fixed point of happiness; but to seek this fixed point in renouncement and farewell to joy, is only to seek it in death. He who moves not a limb is persuaded, perhaps, he is wise; but was this the purpose wherefor mankind was created? Ours is the choice — whether wisdom shall be the honoured wife of our passions and feelings, our thoughts and desires, or the

melancholy bride of death. Let the tomb have its stagnant wisdom, but let there be wisdom also for the hearth where the fire still burns.

§ 56.

It is not by renouncing the joys that are near us that we shall grow wise; but as we grow wise we unconsciously abandon the joys that now are beneath us. Even so does the child, as years come to him, give up one by one without thinking the games that have ceased to amuse. And just as the child learns far more from his play than from work that is given him, so does wisdom progress far more quickly in happiness than in misfortune. It is only one side of morality that unhappiness throws into light; and the man whom sorrow has taught to be wise, is like one who has loved and never been loved in

return. There must always be something unknown to the love whereto no other love has made answer; and this, too, will remain unknown to him whose wisdom is born of sorrow.

"Is happiness truly as happy as people imagine?" was asked of two happy ones once by a philosopher whom protracted injustice had saddened. No; it is a thing more desirable far, but also much less to be envied, than people suppose; for it is in itself quite other than they can conceive who have never been perfectly happy. To be gay is not to be happy, nor will he who is happy always be gay. It is only the little ephemeral pleasures that forever are smiling; and they die away as they smile. But some loftiness once obtained, lasting happiness becomes no less grave than majestic sorrow. Wise men have said it were best for us not to be happy, so that happiness thus might be always the one

thing desired. But how shall the sage, to whom happiness never has come, be aware that wisdom is the one thing alone that happiness neither can sadden nor weary? Those thinkers have learned to love wisdom with a far more intimate love whose lives have been happy, than those whose lives have been sad. The wisdom forced into growth by misfortune is different far from the wisdom that ripens beneath happiness. The first, where it seeks to console, must whisper of happiness; the other tells of itself. He who is sad is taught by his wisdom that happiness yet may be his; he who is happy is taught by his wisdom that he may become wiser still. The discovery of happiness may well be the great aim of wisdom; and we needs must be happy ourselves before we can know that wisdom itself contains all.

§ 57.

There are some who are wholly unable to support the burden of joy. There is a courage of happiness as well as a courage of sorrow. It may even be true that permanent happiness calls for more strength in man than permanent sorrow; for the heart wherein wisdom is not delights more in the expectation of that which it has not yet, than in the full possession of all it has ever desired. He in whom happiness dwells is amazed at the heart that finds aliment only in fear or in hope, and that cannot be nourished on what it possesses, though it possess all it ever desired.

We often see men who are strong and morally prudent whom happiness yet overcomes. Not finding therein all they sought, they do not defend it, or cling to

it, with the energy needful in life. We must have already acquired some not inconsiderable wisdom to be undismayed at perceiving that happiness too has its sorrow, and to be not induced by this sorrow to think that ours cannot be the veritable happiness. The most precious gift that happiness brings is the knowledge that springs up within us that it is not a thing of mere ecstasy, but a thing that bids us reflect. It becomes far less rare, far less inaccessible, from the moment we know that its greatest achievement is to give to the soul that is able to prize it an increase of consciousness, which the soul could elsewhere never have found. To know what happiness means is of far more importance to the soul of man than to enjoy it. To be able long to love happiness great wisdom needs must be ours; but a wisdom still greater for us to perceive, as we lie in the bosom of cloudless joy, that

the fixed and stable part of that joy is found in the force which, deep down in our consciousness, could render us happy still though misfortune wrapped us around. Do not believe you are happy till you have been led by your happiness up to the heights whence itself disappears from your gaze, but leaving you still, unimpaired, the desire to live.

§ 58.

There are some profound thinkers, such as Pascal, Schopenhauer, Hello, who seem not to have been happy, for all that the sense of the infinite, universal, eternal, was loftily throned in their soul. But it may well be an error to think that he who gives voice to the multitude's sorrow must himself always be victim to great personal despair. The horizon of sorrow, surveyed from the height of a thought

that has ceased to be selfish, instinctive, or commonplace, differs but little from the horizon of happiness when this last is regarded from the height of a thought of similar nature, but other in origin. And after all, it matters but little whether the clouds be golden or gloomy that yonder float over the plain; the traveller is glad to have reached the eminence whence his eye may at last repose on illimitable space. The sea is not the less marvellous and mysterious to us though white sails be not for ever flitting over its surface; and neither tempest nor day that is radiant and calm is able to bring enfeeblement unto the life of our soul. Enfeeblement comes through our dwelling, by night and by day, in the airless room of our cold, self-satisfied, trivial, ungenerous thoughts, at a time when the sky all around our abode is reflecting the light of the ocean.

But there is a difference perhaps between the sage and the thinker. It may be that sorrow will steal over the thinker as he stands on the height he has gained; but the sage by his side only smiles—and this smile is so loyal, so human and natural, that the humblest creature of all must needs understand, and will gladly welcome it to him, as it falls like a flower to the foot of the mountain. The thinker throws open the road "which leads from the seen to the unseen;" the sage throws open the highway that takes us from that which we love to-day to that which we yet shall love, and the paths that ascend from that which has ceased to console to that which, for long time to come, shall be laden with deep consolation. It is needful, but not all-sufficient, to have reflected deeply and boldly on man, and nature, and God; for the profoundest thought is of little avail if it contain no

germ of comfort. Indeed, it is only a thought that the thinker, as yet, does not wholly possess; as the other thoughts are, too, that remain outside our normal, every-day life. It is easier far to be sad and dwell in affliction than at once to do what time in the end will always compel us to do: to shake ourselves free from affliction. He who spends his days gloomily, in constant mistrust of his fellows, will often appear a profounder thinker than the other, who lives in the faith and honest simplicity wherein all men should dwell. Is there a man can believe he has done all it lay in his power to do if, as he meditates thus, in the name of his brethren, on the sorrows of life, he hides from them—anxious, perhaps, not to weaken his grandiose picture of sorrow—the reasons wherefore he accepts life, reasons that must be decisive, since he himself continues to live? The thought must be incomplete surely whose object is

not to console. It is easier for you to tell me the cause of your sorrow than, very simply, to speak of the deeper, the weightier reasons that induce your instinct to cling to this life whose distress you bemoan. Which of us finds not, unsought, many thousands of reasons for sorrow? It is doubtless of service that the sage should point out those that are loftiest, for the loftiest reasons for sorrow must be on the eve of becoming reasons for gladness and joy. But reasons that have not within them these germs of greatness and happiness—and in moral life open spaces abound where greatness and happiness blend—these are surely not worthy of mention. Before we can bring happiness to others, we first must be happy ourselves; nor will happiness abide within us unless we confer it on others. If there be a smile upon our lips, those around us will soon smile too; and our happiness will become the truer

and deeper as we see that these others are happy. "It is not seemly that I, who, willingly, have brought sorrow to none, should permit myself to be sad," said Marcus Aurelius, in one of his noblest passages. But are we not saddening ourselves, and learning to sadden others, if we refuse to accept all the happiness offered to man?

§ 59.

The humble thought that connects a mere satisfied glance, an ordinary, everyday act of simple kindness, or an insignificant moment of happiness, with something eternal, and stable, and beautiful, is of far greater value, and infinitely nearer to the mystery of life, than the grand and gloomy meditation wherein sorrow, love, and despair blend with death and destiny and the apathetic forces of

nature. Appearances often deceive us. Hamlet, bewailing his fate on the brink of the gulf, seems profounder, imbued with more passion, than Antoninus Pius, whose tranquil gaze rests on the self-same forces, but who accepts them and questions them calmly, instead of recoiling in horror and calling down curses upon them. Our slightest gesture at nightfall seems more momentous by far than all we have done in the day; but man was created to work in the light, and not to burrow in darkness.

§ 60.

The smallest consoling idea has a strength of its own that is not to be found in the most magnificent plaint, the most exquisite expression of sorrow. The vast, profound thought that brings with it nothing but sadness is energy burning

its wings in the darkness to throw light on the walls of its prison; but the timidest thought of hope, or of cheerful acceptance of inevitable law, in itself already is action in search of a foothold wherefrom to take flight into life. It cannot be harmful for us to acknowledge at times that action begins with reality only, though our thoughts be never so large and disinterested and admirable in themselves. For all that goes to build up what is truly our destiny is contained in those of our thoughts which, hurried along by the mass of ideas still obscure, indistinct, incomplete, have had strength sufficient—or been forced, it may be—to turn into facts, into gestures, into feelings and habits. We do not imply by this that the other thoughts should be neglected. Those that surround our actual life may perhaps be compared with an army besieging a city. The city once taken, the bulk of

the troops would probably not be permitted to pass through the gates. Admission would be doubtless withheld from the irregular part of the army — barbarians, mercenaries, all those, in a word, whose natural tendencies would lead them to drunkenness, pillage, or bloodshed. And it might also very well happen that fully two-thirds of the troops would have taken no part in the final decisive battle. But there often is value in forces that appear to be useless; and the city would evidently not have yielded to panic and thrown open her gates, had the well-disciplined force at the foot of the walls not been flanked by the hordes in the valley. So is it in moral life, too. Those thoughts are not wholly vain that have been unable to touch our actual life; they have helped on, supported, the others; yet is it these others alone that have fully accomplished their mission.

And therefore does it behove us to have in our service, drawn up in front of the crowded ranks of our sad and bewildered thoughts, a group of ideas more human and confident, ready at all times to penetrate vigorously into life.

§ 61.

Even when our endeavour to emerge from reality is due to the purest desire for immaterial good, one gesture must still be worth more than a thousand intentions; nor is this that intentions are valueless, but that the least gesture of goodness, or courage, or justice, makes demands upon us far greater than a thousand lofty intentions. Chiromantists pretend that the whole of our life is engraved on our palm; our life, according to them, being a certain number of actions which imprint ineffaceable

marks on our flesh, before or after fulfilment; whereas not a trace will be left by either thoughts or intentions. If I have for many long days cherished projects of murder or treachery, heroism or sacrifice, my hand will tell nothing of these; but if I have killed some one — involuntarily perhaps, imagining he was about to attack me; or if I have rescued a child from the flames that enwrapped it — my hand will bear, all my life, the infallible sign of love or of murder. Chiromancy may be delusion or not — it matters but little; here we are concerned with the great moral truth that underlies this distinction. The place that I fill in the universe will never be changed by my thought; I shall be as I was to the day of my death; but my actions will almost invariably move me forwards or backwards in the hierarchy of man. Thought is a solitary, wandering, fugitive

force, which advances towards us to-day and perhaps on the morrow will vanish; whereas every deed presupposes a permanent army of ideas and desires which have, after lengthy effort, secured foothold in reality.

§ 62.

But we find ourselves here far away from the noble Antigone and the eternal problem of unproductive virtue. It is certain that destiny — understood in the ordinary sense of the word as meaning the road that leads only to death — is wholly disregardful of virtue. This is the gulf, to which all systems of morality must come, as to a central reservoir, to be purified or troubled for ever; and here must each man decide whether he will justify fate or condemn it. Antigone's sacrifice may well be regarded as the type

of all such as are made in the cause of duty. Do we not all of us know of heroic deeds whose reward has been only misfortune? A friend of my own, one day, as he lay on the bed he was never to leave save for that other one only which is eternal, pointed out to me, one after the other, the different stratagems fate had contrived to lure him to the distant city, where the draught of poisonous water awaited him that he was to swallow, wherefrom he must die. Strangely clear were the countless webs that destiny had spun round this life; and the most trivial event seemed endowed with marvellous malice and forethought. Yet had my friend journeyed forth to that city in fulfilment of one of those duties that only the saint, or the hero, the sage, detects on the horizon of conscience. What can we say? But let us leave this point for the moment, to return to it later. My friend,

had he lived, would on the morrow have gone to another city, called thither by another duty; nor would he have paused to inquire whether it was indeed duty that summoned him. There are beings who do thus obey the commands that their heart whispers low. They fret not at fortune's injustice; they care not though virtue be thankless; theirs it is only to fight the injustice of men, which is the only injustice whereof they, as yet, seem aware.

Ought we never to hesitate, then? and is our duty most faithfully done when we ourselves are wholly unconscious that this thing that we do is a duty? Is it most essential of all that we should attain a height whence duty no longer is looked on as the choice of our noblest feelings, but as the silent necessity of all the nature within us?

§ 63.

There are some who wait and question themselves, who ponder, consider, and then at length decide. They too are right, for it matters but little whether the duty fulfilled be result of instinct or intellect. The gestures of instinct will often recall the delicate, naïve and vague, unexpected beauty that clings to the child's least movement, and touches us deeply; but the gestures of matured resolve have a beauty, too, of their own, more earnest and statelier, stronger. It is given to very few hearts to be naïvely perfect, nor should we go seek in them for the laws of duty. And besides, there is many a sober-hued duty that instinct will fail to perceive, that yet will be clearly espied by mature resolution, bereft though this be of illusion; and man's

moral value is doubtless established by the number of duties he sees and sets forth to accomplish.

It is well that the bulk of mankind should listen to the instinct that prompts them to sacrifice self on the altar of duty, and that without too close self-questioning; for long must the questioning be ere consciousness will give forth the same answer as instinct. And those who do thus close their eyes, and in all meekness follow their instinct, are in truth following the light that is borne at their head, though they know it not, see it not, by the best of their ancestors. But still this is not the ideal; and he who gives up the least thing of all for the sake of his brother, well knowing what it is he gives up and wherefore he does it, stands higher by far in the scale of morality than the other, who flings away life without throwing one glance behind.

§ 64.

In this world there are thousands of weak, noble creatures who fancy that sacrifice always must be the last word of duty; thousands of beautiful souls that know not what should be done, and seek only to yield up their life, holding that to be virtue supreme. They are wrong; supreme virtue consists in the knowledge of what should be done, in the power to decide for ourselves whereto we should offer our life. The duty each holds to be his is by no means his permanent duty. The paramount duty of all is to throw our conception of duty into clearest possible light. The word duty itself will often contain far more error and moral indifference than virtue. Clytemnestra devoted her life to revenge — she murdered her husband for that he had slain Iphigenia;

Orestes sacrificed his life in avenging Agamemnon's death on Clytemnestra. And yet it has only needed a sage to pass by, saying, "pardon your enemies," for all duties of vengeance to be banished for ever from the conscience of man. And so may it one day suffice that another sage shall pass by for many a duty of sacrifice too to be exiled. But in the meanwhile there are certain ideas that prevail on renouncement, resignation, and sacrifice, that are far more destructive to the most beautiful moral forces of man than great vices, or even than crimes.

§ 65.

There are some occasions in life, inevitable and of general bearing, that demand resignation, which is necessary then, and good; but there are many

occasions when we still are able to fight; and at such times resignation is no more than veiled helplessness, idleness, ignorance. So is it with sacrifice too, which indeed is most often the withered arm resignation still shakes in the void. There is beauty in simple self-sacrifice when its hour has come unsought, when its motive is happiness of others; but it cannot be wise, or of use to mankind, to make sacrifice the aim of one's life, or to regard its achievement as the magnificent triumph of the spirit over the body. (And here let us add that infinitely too great importance is generally ascribed to the triumph of spirit over body, these pretended triumphs being most often the total defeat of life.) Sacrifice may be a flower that virtue will pluck on its road, but it was not to gather this flower that virtue set forth on its travels. It is a grave error to think that the beauty of

soul is most clearly revealed by the eager desire for sacrifice; for the soul's fertile beauty resides in its consciousness, in the elevation and power of its life. There are some, it is true, that awake from their sleep at the call of sacrifice only; but these lack the strength and the courage to seek other forms of moral existence. It is, as a rule, far easier to sacrifice self — to give up, that is, our moral existence to the first one who chooses to take it — than to fulfil our spiritual destiny, to accomplish, right to the end, the task for which we were created. It is easier far, as a rule, to die morally, nay, even physically, for others, than to learn how best we should live for them. There are too many beings who thus lull to sleep all initiative, personal life, and absorb themselves wholly in the idea that they are prepared and ready for sacrifice. The consciousness that never succeeds in

travelling beyond this idea, that is satisfied ever to seek an occasion for giving all that which it has, is a consciousness whose eyes are sealed, and that crouches benumbed at the foot of the mountain. There is beauty in the giving of self, and indeed it is only by giving oneself that we do, at the end, begin to possess ourselves somewhat; but if all that we some day shall give to our brethren is the desire to give them ourselves, then are we surely preparing a gift of most slender value. Before giving, let us try to acquire; for this last is a duty wherefrom we are not relieved by the fact of our giving. Let us wait till the hour of sacrifice sounds; till then, each man to his work. The hour will sound at last; but let us not waste all our time in seeking it on the dial of life.

§ 66.

There are many ways of sacrifice; and I speak not here of the self-sacrifice of the strong, who know, as Antigone knew, how to yield themselves up when destiny, taking the form of their brothers' manifest happiness, calls upon them to abandon their own happiness and their life. I speak of the sacrifice here that is made by the feeble; that leans for support, with childish content, on the staff of its own inanity — that is as an old blind nurse, who would rock us in the palsied arms of renouncement and useless suffering. On this point let us note what John Ruskin says, one of the best thinkers of our time: "The will of God respecting us is that we shall live by each other's happiness and life; not by each other's misery or death. A child may have to die for its parents; but the purpose of Heaven is that it shall

rather live for them; that not by sacrifice, but by its strength, its joy, its force of being, it shall be to them renewal of strength; and as the arrow in the hand of the giant. So it is in all other right relations. Men help each other by their joy, not by their sorrow. They are not intended to slay themselves for each other, but to strengthen themselves for each other. And among the many apparently beautiful things which turn, through mistaken use, to utter evil, I am not sure but that the thoughtlessly meek and self-sacrificing spirit of good men must be named as one of the fatallest. They have so often been taught that there is a virtue in mere suffering, as such . . . that they accept pain and defeat as if these were their appointed portion; never understanding that their defeat is not the less to be mourned because it is more fatal to their enemies than to them."

§ 67.

You are told you should love your neighbour as yourself; but if you love yourself meanly, childishly, timidly, even so shall you love your neighbour. Learn therefore to love yourself with a love that is wise and healthy, that is large and complete. This is less easy than it would seem. There is more active charity in the egoism of a strenuous clairvoyant soul than in all the devotion of the soul that is helpless and blind. Before you exist for others it behoves you to exist for yourself; before giving, you first must acquire. Be sure that, if deeply considered, more value attaches to the particle of consciousness gained than to the gift of your entire unconsciousness. Nearly all the great things of this world have been done by men who concerned themselves

not at all with ideas of self-sacrifice. Plato's thoughts flew on — he paused not to let his tears fall with the tears of the mourners in Athens; Newton pursued his experiments calmly, nor left them to search for objects of pity or sorrow; and Marcus Aurelius above all (for here we touch on the most frequent and dangerous form of self-sacrifice) Marcus Aurelius essayed not to dim the brightness of his own soul that he might confer happiness on the inferior soul of Faustina. And if this was right in the lives of these men, of Plato and Newton and Marcus Aurelius, it is equally right in the life of every soul; for each soul has, in its sphere, the same obligations to self as the soul of the greatest. We should tell ourselves, once and for all, that it is the first duty of the soul to become as happy, complete, independent, and great as lies in its power. Herein is no egoism, or pride. To

become effectually generous and sincerely humble there must be within us a confident, tranquil, and clear comprehension of all that we owe to ourselves. To this end we may sacrifice even the passion for sacrifice; for sacrifice never should be the means of ennoblement, but only the sign of our being ennobled.

§ 68.

Let us be ready to offer, when necessity beckons, our wealth, and our time, and our life, to our less fortunate brethren, making them thus an exceptional gift of a few exceptional hours; but the sage is not bound to neglect his happiness, and all that environs his life, in sole preparation for these few exceptional hours of greater or lesser devotion. The truest morality tells us to cling, above all, to the duties that return every day, to acts

of inexhaustible brotherly kindness. And, thus considered, we find that in the every-day walk of life the solitary thing we can ever distribute among those who march by our side, be they joyful or sad, is the confidence, strength, the freedom and peace, of our soul. Let the humblest of men, therefore, never cease to cherish and lift up his soul, even as though he were fully convinced that this soul of his should one day be called to console or gladden a God. When we think of preparing our soul, the preparation should never be other than befits a mission divine. In this domain only, and on this condition, can man truly give himself, can there be pre-eminent sacrifice. And think you that when the hour sounds the gift of a Socrates or Marcus Aurelius — who lived many lives, for many a time had they compassed their whole life around — do you think such a gift is not worth a

thousand times more than what would be given by him who had never stepped over the threshold of consciousness? And if God there be, will He value sacrifice only by the weight of the blood in our body; and the blood of the heart — its virtue, its knowledge of self, its moral existence — do you think this will all go for nothing?

§ 69.

It is not by self-sacrifice that loftiness comes to the soul; but as the soul becomes loftier, sacrifice fades out of sight, as the flowers in the valley disappear from the vision of him who toils up the mountain. Sacrifice is a beautiful token of unrest; but unrest should not be nurtured within us for sake of itself. To the soul that is slowly awakening all appears sacrifice; but few things

indeed are so called by the soul that at last lives the life whereof self-denial, pity, devotion, are no longer indispensable roots, but only invisible flowers. For in truth too many do thus feel the need of destroying — though it be without cause — a happiness, love, or a hope that is theirs, thereby to obtain clearer vision of self in the light of the consuming flame. It is as though they held in their hand a lamp of whose use they know nothing; as though, when the darkness comes on, and they are eager for light, they scatter its substance abroad on the fire of the stranger.

Let us beware lest we act as he did in the fable, who stood watch in the light-house, and gave to the poor in the cabins about him the oil of the mighty lanterns that served to illumine the sea. Every soul in its sphere has charge of a light-house, for which there is more or less

need. The humblest mother who allows her whole life to be crushed, to be saddened, absorbed, by the less important of her motherly duties, is giving her oil to the poor; and her children will suffer, the whole of their life, from there not having been, in the soul of their mother, the radiance it might have acquired. The immaterial force that shines in our heart must shine, first of all, for itself; for on this condition alone shall it shine for the others as well; but see that you give not away the oil of your lamp, though your lamp be never so small; let your gift be the flame, its crown.

§ 70.

In the soul that is noble, altruism must, without doubt, be always the centre of gravity; but the weak soul is apt to lose itself in others, whereas it is in others

that the strong soul discovers itself. Here we have the essential distinction. There is a thing that is loftier still than to love our neighbour as we love ourselves; it is to love ourselves in our neighbour. Some souls there are whom goodness walks before, as there are others that goodness follows. Let us never forget that, in communion of soul, the most generous by no means are they who believe they are constantly giving. A strenuous soul never ceases to take, though it be from the poorest; a weak soul always is giving, even to those that have most; but there is a manner of giving which truly is only the gesture of powerless greed; and we should find, it may be, if reckoning were kept by a God, that in taking from others we give, and in giving we take away. Often indeed will it so come about that the very first ray of enlightenment will descend on the

commonplace soul the day it has met with another which took all that it had to give.

§ 71.

Why not admit that it is not our paramount duty to weep with all those who are weeping, to suffer with all who are sad, to expose our heart to the passer-by for him to caress or stab? Tears and suffering and wounds are helpful to us only when they do not discourage our life. Let us never forget that whatever our mission may be in this world, whatever the aim of our efforts and hopes, and the result of our joys and our sorrows, we are, above all, the blind custodians of life. Absolutely, wholly certain is that one thing only; it is there that we find the only fixed point of human morality. Life has been given us — for a reason we know not — but surely not for

us to enfeeble it, or carelessly fling it away. For it is a particular form of life that we represent on this planet — the life of feeling and thought; whence it follows perhaps that all that inclines to weaken the ardour of feeling and thought is, in its essence, immoral. Our task let it be then to foster this ardour, to enhance and embellish it; let us constantly strive to acquire deeper faith in the greatness of man, in his strength and his destiny; or, we might equally say, in his bitterness, weakness, and wretchedness; for to be loftily wretched is no less soul-quickening than it is to be loftily happy. After all, it matters but little whether it be man or the universe that we admire, so long as something appear truly admirable to us, and exalt our sense of the infinite. Every new star that is found in the sky will lend of its rays to the passions, and thoughts, and the courage, of man.

Whatever of beauty we see in all that surrounds us, within us already is beautiful; whatever we find in ourselves that is great and adorable, that do we find too in others. If my soul, on awaking this morning, was cheered, as it dwelt on its love, by a thought that drew near to a God — a God, we have said, who is doubtless no more than the loveliest desire of our soul — then shall I behold this same thought astir in the beggar who passes my window the moment thereafter; and I shall love him the more for that I understand him the better. And let us not think that love of this kind can be useless; for indeed, if one day we shall know the thing that has to be done, it will only be thanks to the few who love in this fashion, with an ever-deepening love. From the conscious and infinite love must the true morality spring, nor can there be greater charity than the

effort to ennoble our fellows. But I cannot ennoble you if I have not become noble myself; I have no admiration to give you if there be naught in myself I admire. If the deed I have done be heroic, its truest reward will be my conviction that of an equal deed you are capable too; this conviction ever will tend to become more spontaneous within me, and more unconquerable. Every thought that quickens my heart brings quickening, too, to the love and respect that I have for mankind. As I rise aloft, you rise with me. But if, the better to love you, I deem it my duty to tear off the wings from my love, your love being wingless as yet; then shall I have added in vain to the plaints and the tears in the valley, but brought my own love thereby not one whit nearer the mountain. Our love should always be lodged on the highest peak we can attain. Let our

love not spring from pity when it can be born of love; let us not forgive for charity's sake when justice offers forgiveness; nor let us try to console there where we can respect. Let our one never-ceasing care be to better the love that we offer our fellows. One cup of this love that is drawn from the spring on the mountain is worth a hundred taken from the stagnant well of ordinary charity. And if there be one whom you no longer can love because of the pity you feel, or the tears that he sheds; and if he ignore to the end that you love him because you ennobled him at the same time you ennobled yourself, it matters but little after all; for you have done what you held to be best, and the best is not always most useful. Should we not invariably act in this life as though the God whom our heart desires with its highest desire were watching our every action?

§ 72.

In a terrible catastrophe that took place but a short time ago,* destiny afforded yet another, and perhaps the most startling instance of what it pleases men to term her injustice, her blindness, or her irresponsibility. She seemed to have singled out for especial chastisement the solitary external virtue that reason has left us—our love for our fellow-man. There must have been some moderately righteous men amongst the victims, and it seems almost certain that there was at least one whose virtue was wholly disinterested and sincere. It is the presence of this one truly good man that warrants our asking, in all its simplicity, the terrible question that rises to our lips. Had he not been there we might have tried to believe that this act

* The fire at the Bazar de la Charité in Paris.

of seemingly monstrous injustice was in reality composed of particles of sovereign justice. We might have whispered to ourselves that what they termed charity, out yonder, was perhaps only the arrogant flower of permanent injustice.

We seem unwilling to recognise the blindness of the external forces, such as air, fire, water, the laws of gravity and others, with which we must deal and do battle. The need is heavy upon us to find excuses for fate; and even when blaming her, we seem to be endeavouring still to explain the causes of her past and her future action, conscious the while of a feeling of pained surprise, as though a man we valued highly had done some dreadful deed. We love to idealise destiny, and are wont to credit her with a sense of justice loftier far than our own; and however great the injustice whereof she may have been guilty, our confidence will soon flow back to her, the

first feeling of dismay over; for in our heart we plead that she must have reasons we cannot fathom, that there must be laws we cannot divine. The gloom of the world would crush us were we to dissociate morality from fate. To doubt the existence of this high, protecting justice and virtue, would seem to us to be denying the existence of all justice and of all virtue.

We are no longer able to accept the narrow morality of positive religion, which entices with reward and threatens with punishment; and yet we are apt to forget that, were fate possessed of the most rudimentary sense of justice, our conception of a lofty, disinterested morality would fade into thin air. What merit in being just ourselves if we be not convinced of the absolute injustice of fate? We no longer believe in the ideals once held by saints, and we are confident that a wise God will hold of as little account

the duty done through hope of recompense, as the evil done for sake of gain; and this even though the recompense hoped for be nothing but the self-ensuing peace of mind. We say that God, who must be at least as high as the highest thoughts He has implanted in the best of men, will withhold His smile from those who have desired but to please Him; and that they only who have done good for the sake of good and as though He existed not, they only who have loved virtue more than they loved God Himself, shall be allowed to stand by His side. And yet, and for all this, no sooner does the event confront us, than we discover that we still are guided by the "moral maxims" of our childhood. Of more avail would be a "List of chastised virtues." The soul that is quick with life would find its profit therein; the cause of virtue would gain in vigour and in majesty. Let us

not forget that it is from the very non-morality of destiny that a nobler morality must spring into life; for here, as everywhere, man is never so strong with his own native strength as when he realises that he stands entirely alone. As we consider the crowning injustice of fate, it is the negation of high moral law that disturbs us; but from this negation there at once arises a moral law that is higher still. He who no longer believes in reward or punishment must do good for the sake of good. Even though a moral law seem on the eve of disappearing, we need have no cause for disquiet; its place will be speedily filled by a law that is greater still. To attribute morality to fate is but to lessen the purity of our ideal; to admit the injustice of fate is to throw open before us the ever-widening fields of a still loftier morality. Let us not think virtue will crumble, though God

Himself seem unjust. Where shall the virtue of man find more everlasting foundation than in the seeming injustice of God?

§ 73.

Let us not cavil, therefore, at nature's indifference to the sage. It is only because we are not yet wise enough that this indifference seems strange; for the first duty of wisdom is to throw into light the humbleness of the place in the universe that is filled by man.

Within his sphere he seems of importance, as the bee in its cell of honey; but it were idle to suppose that a single flower the more will blossom in the fields because the queen bee has proved herself a heroine in the hive. We need not fear that we depreciate ourselves when we extol the universe. Whether it be ourselves or the entire world that we consider great,

still will there quicken within our soul the sense of the infinite, which is of the life-blood of virtue. What is an act of virtue that we should expect such mighty reward? It is within ourselves that reward must be found, for the law of gravitation will not swerve. They only who know not what goodness is are ever clamouring for the wage of goodness. Above all, let us never forget that an act of goodness is of itself always an act of happiness. It is the flower of a long inner life of joy and contentment; it tells of peaceful hours and days on the sunniest heights of our soul. No reward coming after the event can compare with the sweet reward that went with it. The upright man who perished in the catastrophe I mentioned was there because his soul had found a peace and strength in virtue that not happiness, love, or glory could have given him. Were the flames to retreat

before such men, were the waters to open and death to hesitate, what were righteousness or heroism then? Would not the true happiness of virtue be destroyed? virtue that is happy because it is noble and pure, that is noble and pure because it desires no reward? There may be human joy in doing good with definite purpose, but they who do good expecting nothing in return know a joy that is divine. Where we do evil our reasons mostly are known to us, but our good deed becomes the purer for our ignorance of its motive. Would we know how to value the righteous man, we have but to question him as to the motives of his righteousness. He will probably be the most truly righteous who is least ready with his answer. Some may suppose that as intellect widens many a motive for heroism will be lost to the soul; but it should be borne in mind that the wider intellect

brings with it an ideal of heroism loftier and more disinterested still. And this much at least is certain: he who thinks that virtue stands in need of the approval of destiny or of worlds, has not yet within him the veritable sense of virtue. Truly to act well we must do good because of our craving for good, a more intimate knowledge of goodness being all we expect in return. "With no witness save his heart alone," said St. Just. In the eyes of a God there must surely be marked distinction between the soul of the man who believes that the rays of a virtuous deed shall shine through furthest space, and the soul of the other who knows they illumine his heart alone. There may be greater momentary strength in the over-ambitious truth, but the strength that is brought by the humble human truth is far more earnest and patient. Is it wiser to be as the soldier who imagines that each blow

he strikes brings victory nearer, or as the other who knows his little account in the combat but still fights sturdily on? The upright man would scorn to deceive his neighbour, but is ever unduly inclined to regard some measure of self-deception as inseparable from his ideal.

If there were profit in virtue, then would the noblest of men be compelled to seek happiness elsewhere; and God would destroy their main object in life were He to reward them often. Nothing is indispensable, perhaps, or even necessary; and it may be that if the joy of doing good for sake of good were taken from the soul, it would find other, purer joys; but in the meantime, it is the most beautiful joy we know, therefore let us respect it. Let us not resent the misfortunes that sometimes befall virtue, lest we at the same time disturb the limpid essence of its happiness. The soul that has this

happiness dreams no more of reward, than others expect punishment because of their wickedness. They only are ever clamouring for justice who know it not in their lives.

§ 74.

There is wisdom in the Hindu saying: "Work as they work, who are ambitious. Respect life, as they respect it who desire it. Be happy, as they are happy who live for happiness alone."

And this is indeed the central point of human wisdom — to act as though each deed must bear wondrous, everlasting fruit, and yet to realise the insignificance of a just action before the universe; to grasp the disproportion of things, and yet to march onwards as though the proportions were established by man; to keep our eyes fixed on the great sphere, and

ourselves to move in the little sphere with as much confidence and earnestness, with as much assurance and satisfaction, as though the great sphere were contained within it.

Is there need of illusion to keep alive our desire for good? then must this desire stand confessed as foreign to the nature of man. It is a mistake to imagine that the heart will long cherish within it the ideas that reason has banished; but within the heart there is much that reason may take to itself. And at last the heart becomes the refuge to which reason is apt to fly, ever more and more simply, each time that the night steals upon it; for it is to the heart as a young, clairvoyant girl, who still at times needs advice from her blind, but smiling, mother. There comes a moment in life when moral beauty seems more urgent, more penetrating, than intellectual beauty; when all

that the mind has treasured must be bathed in the greatness of soul, lest it perish in the sandy desert, forlorn as a river that seeks in vain for the sea.

§ 75.

But let us exaggerate nothing when dealing with wisdom, though it be wisdom itself. The external forces, we know, will not yield to the righteous man; but still he is absolute lord of most of the inner powers; and these are for ever spinning the web of nearly all our happiness and sorrow. We have said elsewhere that the sage, as he passes by, intervenes in countless dramas. Indeed his mere presence suffices to arrest most of the calamities that arise from error or evil. They cannot approach him, or even those who are near him. A chance meeting with a creature endowed with simple and loving

wisdom has stayed the hands of men who else had committed countless acts of folly or wickedness; for in life most characters are subordinate, and it is chance alone that determines whether the track which they are to follow shall be that of suffering or peace. The atmosphere around Jean-Jacques Rousseau was heavy with lamentation and treachery, delirium, deceit, and cunning; whereas Jean Paul moved in the midst of loyalty and nobility, the centre of peace and love. We subdue that in others which we have learned to subdue in ourselves. Around the upright man there is drawn a wide circle of peace, within which the arrows of evil soon cease to fall; nor have his fellows the power to inflict moral suffering upon him. For indeed if our tears can flow because of our enemies' malice, it is only because we ourselves would fain make our enemies weep. If the shafts of envy can wound

and draw blood, it is only because we ourselves have shafts that we wish to throw; if treachery can wring a groan from us, we must be disloyal ourselves. Only those weapons can wound the soul that it has not yet sacrificed on the altar of Love.

§ 76.

The dramas of virtue are played on a stage whose mysteries not even the wisest can fathom. It is only as the last word is spoken that the curtain is raised for an instant; we know nothing of all that preceded, of the brightness or gloom that enwrapped it. But of one thing at least the just man may be certain; it will be in an act of charity, or justice, that his destiny will meet him face to face. The blow must inevitably find him prepared, in a state of grace, as the

Christian calls it; in other words, in a state of inner happiness. And that in itself bars the door on evil destiny within us, and closes most of the gates by which external misfortune can enter. As our conception of duty and happiness gains in dignity, so does the sway of moral suffering become the more restricted and purer. And is not moral suffering the most tyrannical weapon in the armoury of destiny? Our happiness mainly depends on the freedom that reigns within us; a freedom that widens with every good deed, and contracts beneath acts of evil. Not metaphorically, but literally, does Marcus Aurelius free himself each time he discovers a new truth in indulgence, each time that he pardons, each time he reflects. Still less of a metaphor is it to declare that Macbeth enchains himself anew with every fresh crime. And if this be true of the great crimes of kings and

the virtues of heroes, it is no less true of the humblest faults and most hidden virtues of ordinary life. Many a youthful Marcus Aurelius is still about us; many a Macbeth, who never stirs from his room. However imperfect our conception of virtue, still let us cling to it; for a moment's forgetfulness exposes us to all the malignant forces from without. The simplest lie to myself, buried though it may be in the silence of my soul, may yet be as dangerous to my inner liberty as an act of treachery on the market-place. And from the moment that my inner liberty is threatened, destiny prowls around my external liberty as stealthily as a beast of prey that has long been tracking its victim.

§ 77.

Can we conceive a situation in life wherein a man who is truly wise and

noble can be made to suffer as profoundly as the man who follows evil? In this world it is far more certain that vice will be punished, than that virtue will meet with reward; yet we must bear in mind that it is the habit of crime to shriek aloud beneath its punishment, whereas virtue rewards itself in the silence that is the walled garden of its happiness. Evil drags horrid catastrophe behind it; but an act of virtue is only a silent offering to the profoundest laws of life; and therefore, doubtless, does the balance of mighty justice seem more ready to incline beneath deeds of darkness than beneath those of light. But if we can scarcely believe that "happiness in crime" be possible, have we more warrant for faith in the "unhappiness of virtue"? We know that the executioner can stretch Spinoza on the rack, and that terrible disease will spare Antoninus Pius no more

than Goneril or Regan; but pain such as this belongs to the animal, not the human, side of man. Wisdom has indeed sent science, the youngest of her sisters, into the realm of destiny, with the mission to bring the zone of physical suffering within ever-narrowing limits; but there are inaccessible regions within that realm, where disaster ever will rule. Some stricken ones there will always be, victims to irreducible injustice; and yet will the true wisdom, in the midst of its sorrow, only be fortified thereby, only gain in self-reliance and humanity all that it may lose in more mystic qualities. We become truly just only when it is finally borne home to us that we must search within ourselves for our model of justice. Again, it is the injustice of destiny that restores man to his place in the universe. It is not well that he should for ever be casting anxious glances about him, like the

child that has strayed from its mother's side. Nor need we believe that these disillusions must necessarily give rise to moral discouragement; for the truth that seems discouraging does in reality only transform the courage of those strong enough to accept it; and, in any event, a truth that disheartens, because it is true, is still of far more value than the most stimulating of falsehoods. But indeed no truth can discourage, whereas much that passes as courage only bears the semblance thereof. The thing that enfeebles the weak will but help to strengthen the strong. "Do you remember the day," wrote a woman to her lover, "when we sat together by the window that looked on to the sea, and watched the meek procession of white-sailed ships as they followed each other into harbour? . . . Ah! how that day comes back to me! . . . Do you remember that one ship had

a sail that was nearly black, and that she was the last to come in? And do you remember, too, that the hour of separation was upon us, and that the arrival of the last boat of all was to be our signal for departure? We might perhaps have found cause for sadness in the gloomy sail that fluttered at her mast; but we who loved each other had 'accepted' life, and we only smiled as we once more recognised the kinship of our thoughts." Yes, it is thus we should act; and though we cannot always smile as the black sail heaves in sight, yet is it possible for us to find in our life something that shall absorb us to the exclusion of sadness, as her love absorbed the woman whose words I have quoted. Complaints of injustice grow less frequent as the brain and the heart expand. It is well to remind ourselves that in this world, whose fruit we are, all that concerns us must necessarily be more conformable with

our existence than the most beneficent law of our imagination. The time has arrived perhaps when man must learn to place the centre of his joys and pride elsewhere than within himself. As this idea takes firmer root within us, so do we become more conscious of our helplessness beneath its overwhelming force; yet is it at the same time borne home to us that of this force we ourselves form part; and even as we writhe beneath it, we are compelled to admire, as the youthful Telemachus admired the power of his father's arm. Our own instinctive actions awaken within us an eager curiosity, an affectionate, pleased surprise: why should we not train ourselves thus to regard the instinctive actions of nature? We love to throw the dim light of our reason on to our unconsciousness: why not let it play on what we term the unconsciousness of the universe? We are no less deeply concerned with the one

than the other. "After he has become acquainted with the power that is in him," said a philosopher, "one of the highest privileges of man is to realise his individual powerlessness. Out of the very disproportion between the infinite which kills us and this nothing that we are, there arises within us a sensation that is not without grandeur; we feel that we would rather be crushed by a mountain than done to death by a pebble, as in war we would rather succumb beneath the charge of thousands than fall victim to a single arm. And as our intellect lays bare to us the immensity of our helplessness, so does it rob defeat of its sting." Who knows? We are already conscious of moments when the something that has conquered us seems nearer to ourselves than the part of us that has yielded. Of all our characteristics, self-esteem is the one that most readily changes its home, for we are instinctively aware

that it has never truly formed part of us. The self-esteem of the courtier who waits on the mighty king soon finds more splendid lodging in the king's boundless power; and the disgrace that may befall him will wound his pride the less for that it has descended from the height of a throne. Were nature to become less indifferent, it would no longer appear so vast. Our unfettered sense of the infinite cannot afford to dispense with one particle of the infinite, with one particle of its indifference; and there will ever remain something within our soul that would rather weep at times in a world that knows no limit, than enjoy perpetual happiness in a world that is hemmed in.

If destiny were invariably just in her dealings with the wise, then doubtless would the existence of such a law furnish sufficient proof of its excellence; but as it is wholly indifferent, it is better so, and

perhaps even greater; for what the actions of the soul may lose in importance thereby does but go to swell the dignity of the universe. And loss of grandeur to the sage there is none; for he is as profoundly sensitive to the greatness of nature as to the greatness that lurks within man. Why harass our soul with endeavour to locate the infinite? As much of it as can be given to man will go to him who has learned to wonder.

§ 78.

Do you know a novel of Balzac, belonging to the "Célibataires" series, called *Pierrette?* It is not one of Balzac's masterpieces, but it has points of much interest for us. It is the story of an orphaned Breton girl, a sweet, innocent child, who is suddenly snatched away, by her evil star, from the grandparents who

adore her, and transferred to the care of an aunt and uncle, Monsieur Rogron and his sister Sylvia. A hard, gloomy couple, these two; retired shopkeepers, who live in a dreary house in the back streets of a dreary country town. Their celibacy weighs heavily upon them; they are miserly, and absurdly vain; morose, and instinctively full of hatred.

The poor inoffensive girl has hardly set foot in the house before her martyrdom begins. There are terrible questions of money and economy, ambitions to be gratified, marriages to be prevented, inheritances to be turned aside: complications of every kind. The neighbours and friends of the Rogrons behold the long and painful sufferings of the victim with unruffled tranquillity, for their every natural instinct leads them to applaud the success of the stronger. And at last Pierrette dies, as unhappily as she has

lived; while the others all triumph — the Rogrons, the detestable lawyer Vinet, and all those who had helped them; and the subsequent happiness of these wretches remains wholly untroubled. Fate would even seem to smile upon them; and Balzac, carried away in spite of himself by the reality of it all, ends his story, almost regretfully, with these words: "How the social villainies of this world would thrive under our laws if there were no God!"

We need not go to fiction for tragedies of this kind; there are many houses in which they are matters of daily occurrence. I have borrowed this instance from Balzac's pages because the story lay there ready to hand; the chronicle, day by day, of the triumph of injustice. The very highest morality is served by such instances, and a great lesson is taught; and perhaps the moralists are wrong who try to weaken this lesson by finding

excuses for the iniquities of fate. Some are satisfied that God will give innocence its due reward. Others tell us that in this case it is not the victim who has the greatest claim upon our sympathy. And these are doubtless right, from many points of view; for little Pierrette, miserable though she was, and cruelly tormented, did yet experience joys that her tyrants never would know. In the midst of her sorrow, she remained gentle, and tender, and loving; and therein lies greater happiness than in hiding cruelty, hatred, and selfishness beneath a smile. It is sad to love and be unloved, but sadder still to be unable to love. And how great is the difference between the petty, sordid desires, the grotesque delights, of the Rogrons, and the mighty longing that filled the child's soul as she looked forward to the time when injustice at last should cease! Little

wistful Pierrette was perhaps no wiser than those about her; but before such as must bear unmerited suffering there stretches a wide horizon, which here and again takes in the joys that only the loftiest know; even as the horizon of the earth, though not seen from the mountain peak, would appear at times to be one with the corner-stone of heaven. The injustice we commit speedily reduces us to petty, material pleasures; but, as we revel in these, we envy our victim; for our tyranny has thrown open the door to joys whereof we cannot deprive him — joys that are wholly beyond our reach, joys that are purely spiritual. And the door that opens wide to the victim is sealed in the tyrant's soul; and the sufferer breathes a purer air than he who has made him suffer. In the hearts of the persecuted there is radiance, where those who persecute have

only gloom; and is it not on the light within us that the wellbeing of happiness depends? He who brings sorrow with him stifles more happiness within himself than in the man he overwhelms. Which of us, had he to choose, but would rather be Pierrette than Rogron? The instinct of happiness within us needs no telling that he who is morally right must be happier than he who is wrong, though the wrong be done from the height of a throne. And, even though the Rogrons be unaware of their injustice, it alters nothing; for, be we aware or unaware of the evil we commit, the air we breathe will still be heavily charged. Nay, more—to him who knows he does wrong there may come, perhaps, the desire to escape from his prison; but the other will die in his cell, without even his thoughts having travelled beyond the gloomy walls that conceal from him the true destiny of man.

§ 79.

Why seek justice where it cannot be? and where can it be, save in our soul? Its language is the natural language of the spirit of man; but this spirit must learn new words ere it can travel in the universe. Justice is the very last thing of all wherewith the universe concerns itself. It is equilibrium that absorbs its attention; and what we term justice is truly nothing but this equilibrium transformed, as honey is nothing but a transformation of the sweetness found in the flower. Outside man there is no justice; within him injustice cannot be. The body may revel in ill-gotten pleasure, but virtue alone can bring contentment to the soul. Our inner happiness is measured out to us by an incorruptible judge; and the mere endeavour to corrupt

him still further reduces the sum of the final, veritable happiness he lets fall into the shining scale. It is lamentable enough that a Rogron should be able to torture a helpless child, and darken the few hours of life the chance of the world had given; but injustice there would be only if his wickedness procured him the inner happiness and peace, the elevation of thought and habit, that long years spent in love and meditation had procured for Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius. Some slight intellectual satisfaction there may be in the doing of evil; but none the less does each wrongful deed clip the wings of our thoughts, till at length they can only crawl amidst all that is fleeting and personal. To commit an act of injustice is to prove we have not yet attained the happiness within our grasp. And in evil —reduce things to their primal elements, and you shall find that even the wicked

are seeking some measure of peace, a certain up-lifting of soul. They may think themselves happy, and rejoice for such dole as may come to them; but would it have satisfied Marcus Aurelius, who knew the lofty tranquillity, the great quickening of the soul? Show a vast lake to the child who has never beheld the sea, it will clap its hands and be glad, and think the sea is before it; but therefore none the less does the veritable sea exist.

It may be that a man will find happiness in the puny little victories that his vanity, envy, or indifference win for him day after day. Shall we begrudge him such happiness, we, whose eyes can see further? Shall we strive for his consciousness of life, for the religion that pleases his soul, for the conception of the universe that justifies his cares? Yet out of these things are the banks made

between which happiness flows; and as they are, so shall the river be, in shallowness or in depth. He may believe that there is a God, or that there is no God; that all ends in this world, or that it is prolonged into the next; that all is matter, or that all is spirit. He will believe these things much as wise men believe them; but do you think his manner of belief can be the same? To look fearlessly upon life; to accept the laws of nature, not with meek resignation, but as her sons, who dare to search and question; to have peace and confidence within our soul — these are the beliefs that make for happiness. But to believe is not enough; all depends on how we believe. I may believe that there is no God, that I am self-contained, that my brief sojourn here serves no purpose; that in the economy of this world without limit my existence counts for as little as the evanescent hue

of a flower — I may believe all this, in a deeply religious spirit, with the infinite throbbing within me; you may believe in one all-powerful God, who cherishes and protects you, yet your belief may be mean, and petty, and small. I shall be happier than you, and calmer, if my doubt is greater, and nobler, and more earnest than is your faith; if it has probed more deeply into my soul, traversed wider horizons, if there are more things it has loved. And if the thoughts and feelings on which my doubt reposes have become vaster and purer than those that support your faith, then shall the God of my disbelief become mightier and of supremer comfort than the God to whom you cling. For, indeed, belief and unbelief are mere empty words; not so the loyalty, the greatness and profoundness of the reasons wherefore we believe or do not believe.

§ 80.

We do not choose these reasons; they are rewards that have to be earned. Those we have chosen are only slaves we have happened to buy; and their life is but feeble; they hold themselves shyly aloof, ever watching for a chance to escape. But the reasons we have deserved stand faithfully by us; they are so many pensive Antigones, on whose help we may ever rely. Nor can such reasons as these be forcibly lodged in the soul; for indeed they must have dwelt there from earliest days, have spent their childhood there, nourished on our every thought and action; and tokens recalling a life of devotion and love must surround them on every side. And as they throw deeper root — as the mists clear away from our soul and reveal a still wider horizon,

so does the horizon of happiness widen also; for it is only in the space that our thoughts and our feelings enclose that our happiness can breathe in freedom. It demands no material space, but finds ever too narrow the spiritual fields we throw open; wherefore we must unceasingly endeavour to enlarge its territory, until such time as, soaring up on high, it finds sufficient aliment in the space which it does of itself fling open. Then it is, and then only, that happiness truly illumines the most eternal, most human part of man; and indeed all other forms of happiness are merely unconscious fragments of this great happiness, which, as it reflects and looks before it, is conscious of no limit within itself or in all that surrounds it.

§ 81.

This space must dwindle daily in those who follow evil, seeing that their thoughts and feelings must of necessity dwindle also. But the man who has risen somewhat will soon forsake the ways of evil; for look deep down enough and you shall ever find its origin in straitened feeling and stunted thought. He does evil no longer, because his thoughts are purer and higher; and now that he is incapable of evil, his thoughts will become purer still. And thus do our thoughts and actions, having won their way into the placid heaven where no barrier restrains the soul, become as inseparable as the wings of a bird; and what to the bird was only a law of equilibrium is here transformed into a law of justice.

§ 82.

Who can tell whether the satisfaction derived from evil can ever penetrate to the soul, unless there mingle with it a vague desire, a promise, a distant hope, of goodness or of pity?

The joy of the wretch whose victim lies in his power is perhaps unredeemed in its gloom and futility, save by the thought of mercy that flashes across him. Evil at times would seem compelled to beg a ray of light from virtue, to shed lustre on its triumph. Is it possible for a man to smile in his hatred and not borrow the smile of love? But the smile will be short-lived, for here, as everywhere, there is no inner injustice. Within the soul the high-water mark of happiness is always level with that of justice or charity — which words I use here indifferently, for indeed

what is charity or love but justice with naught to do but count its jewels? The man who goes forth to seek his happiness in evil does merely prove thereby that he is less happy than the other who watches, and disapproves. And yet his object is identical with that of the upright man. He too is in search of happiness, of some sort of peace and certainty. Of what avail to punish him? We do not blame the poor because their home is not a palace; it is sad enough to be compelled to live in a hovel. He whose eyes can see the invisible, knows that in the soul of the most unjust man there is justice still: justice, with all her attributes, her stainless garments and holy activity. He knows that the soul of the sinner is ever balancing peace and love, and the consciousness of life, no less scrupulously than the soul of philosopher, saint, or hero; that it watches the smiles of earth and sky, and is no less

aware of all whereby those smiles are destroyed, degraded, and poisoned. We are not wrong, perhaps, to be heedful of justice in the midst of a universe that heeds not at all; as the bee is not wrong to make honey in a world that itself can make none. But we are wrong to desire an external justice, since we know that it does not exist. Let that which is in us suffice. All is for ever being weighed and judged in our soul. It is we who shall judge ourselves; or rather, our happiness is our judge.

§ 83.

It may be urged that virtue is subject to defeat and disappointment, no less than vice; but the defeats and disappointments of virtue bring with them no gloom or distress, for they do but tend to soothe and enlighten our thoughts. An act of

virtue may sink into the void, but it is then, most of all, that we learn to gauge the depths of life and of soul; and often will it fall into these depths like a radiant stone, beside which our thoughts loom pale. With every vicious scheme that fails before the innocence of Pierrette, Madame Rogron's soul shrivels anew; whereas the clemency of Titus, falling on thankless soil, does but induce him to lift his eyes on high, far beyond love or pardon. There is no gain in shutting out the world, though it be with walls of righteousness. The last gesture of virtue should be that of an angel flinging open the door. We should welcome our disillusions; for were it the will of destiny that our pardon should always transform an enemy into a brother, then should we go to our grave still unaware of all that springs to light within us beneath the act of unwise clemency, whose unwisdom we never regret.

We should die without once having matched all that is best in our soul against the forces that hedge life around. The kindly deed that is wasted, the lofty or only lovely thought that falls on barren ground — these too have their value, for the light they throw differs far from the radiance triumphant virtue suffuses; and thus may we see many things in their differing aspect. There were surely much joy in the thought that love must invariably triumph; but greater joy is there still in tearing aside this illusion, and marching straight on to the truth. "Man has been but too prone," said a philosopher, whom death carried off too soon — "man has been but too prone, through all the course of his history, to lodge his dignity within his errors, and to look upon truth as a thing that depreciated himself. It may sometimes seem less glorious than illusion, but it has the

advantage of being true. In the whole domain of thought there is nothing loftier than truth." And there is no bitterness herein, for indeed to the sage truth can never be bitter. He, too, has had his longings in the past, has conceived that truth might move mountains, that a loving act might for ever soften the hearts of men; but to-day he has learned to prefer that this should not be so. Nor is it overweening pride that thus has changed him; he does not think himself more virtuous than the universe; it is his insignificance in the universe that has been made clear to him. It is no longer for the spiritual fruit it bears that he tends the love of justice he has found implanted in his soul, but for the living flowers that spring up within him, and because of his deep respect for all created things. He has no curses for the ungrateful friend, nor even for ingratitude itself. He does not say,

"I am better than that man," or "I shall not fall into that vice." But he is taught by ingratitude that benevolence contains joys that are greater than those that gratitude can bestow; joys that are less personal, but more in harmony with life as a whole. He finds more pleasure in the attempt to understand that which is, than in the struggle to believe that which he desires. For a long time he has been like the beggar who was suddenly borne away from his hut and lodged in a magnificent palace. He awoke and threw uneasy glances about him, seeking, in that immense hall, for the squalid things he remembered to have had in his tiny room. Where were the hearth, the bed, the table, stool, and basin? The humble torch of his vigils still trembled by his side, but its light could not reach the lofty ceiling. The little wings of flame threw their feeble flicker on to a

pillar close by, which was all that stood out from the darkness. But little by little his eyes grew accustomed to his new abode. He wandered through room after room, and rejoiced as profoundly at all that his torch left in darkness as at all that it threw into light. At first he could have wished in his heart that the doors had been somewhat less lofty, the staircases not quite so ample, the galleries less lost in gloom; but as he went straight before him, he felt all the beauty and grandeur of that which was yet so unlike the home of his dream. He rejoiced to discover that here bed and table were not the centre round which all revolved, as it had been with him in his hut. He was glad that the palace had not been built to conform with the humble habits his misery had forced upon him. He even learned to admire the things that defeated his hopes, for they enabled his eyes to see

deeper. The sage is consoled and fortified by everything that exists, for indeed it is of the essence of wisdom to seek out all that exists, and to admit it within its circle.

§ 84.

Wisdom even admits the Rogrons; for she holds life of profounder interest than even justice or virtue; and where her attention is disputed by a virtue lost in abstraction, and by a humble, walled-in life, she will incline to the humble life, and not to the magnificent virtue that holds itself proudly aloof. It is of the nature of wisdom to despise nothing; indeed, in this world there is perhaps only one thing truly contemptible, and that thing is contempt itself. Thinkers too often are apt to despise those who go through life without thinking. Thought is doubtless of high value; our first

endeavour should be to think as often and as well as we can; but, for all that, it is somewhat beside the mark to believe that the possession, or lack, of a certain faculty for handling general ideas can interpose an actual barrier between men. After all, the difference between the greatest thinker and the smallest provincial burgher is often only the difference between a truth that can sometimes express itself and a truth that can never crystallise into form. The difference is considerable—a gap, but not a chasm. The higher our thoughts ascend, the vainer and the more arbitrary seems the distinction between him who is thinking always and him who thinks not yet. The little burgher is full of prejudice and of passions at which we smile; his ideas are small and petty, and sometimes contemptible enough; and yet, place him side by side with the sage, before an essential circumstance of life,

before love, grief, death, before something that calls for true heroism, and it shall happen more than once that the sage will turn to his humble companion as to the guardian of a truth no less profound, no less deeply human, than his own. There are moments when the sage realises that his spiritual treasures are naught; that it is only a few words, or habits, that divide him from other men; there are moments when he even doubts the value of those words. Those are the moments when wisdom flowers and sends forth blossom. Thought may sometimes deceive; and the thinker who goes astray must often retrace his footsteps to the spot whence those who think not have never moved away, where they still remain faithfully seated round the silent, essential truth. They are the guardians of the watch-fires of the tribe; the others take lighted torches and go wandering abroad; but

when the air grows heavy and threatens the feeble flame, then is it well to turn back and draw close to the watch-fires once more. These fires seem never to stir from the spot where they always have been; but in truth they ever are moving, keeping time with the worlds; and their flame marks the hour of humanity on the dial of the universe. We know exactly how much the inert forces owe to the thinker; we forget the deep indebtedness of the thinker to inert force. In a world where all were thinkers, more than one indispensable truth might perhaps for ever be lost. For indeed the thinker must never lose touch with those who do not think, as his thoughts would then quickly cease to be just or profound. To disdain is only too easy, not so to understand; but in him who is truly wise there passes no thought of disdain, but it will, sooner or later, evolve into full comprehension.

The thought that can travel scornfully over the heads of that great silent throng without recognising its myriad brothers and sisters that are slumbering there in its midst, is only too often merely a sterile, vicious dream. We do well to remind ourselves at times that the spiritual, no less than the physical, atmosphere demands more nitrogen than oxygen for the air to be breathed by man.

§ 85.

It need not surprise us that thinkers like Balzac should have loved to dwell on these humble lives. Eternal sameness runs through them, and yet does each century mark profoundest change in the atmosphere that enwraps them. The sky above has altered, but these simple lives have ever the self-same gestures; and it is these unchanging gestures that tell of

the altered sky. A great deed of heroism fascinates us; our eye cannot travel beyond the act itself; but insignificant thoughts and deeds lead us on to the horizon beyond them; and is not the shining star of human wisdom always situate on the horizon? If we could see these things as nature sees them, with her thoughts and feelings, we should realise that the uniform mediocrity that runs through these lives cannot truly be mediocre, from the mere fact of its uniformity. And indeed this matters but little; we can never judge another soul above the high-water mark of our own; and however insignificant a creature may seem to us at first, as our own soul emerges from shadow, so does the shadow lift from him. There is nothing our eyes behold that is too small to deserve our love; and there where we cannot love, we have only to raise our lamp till it reaches

the level of love, and then throw its light around. Let only one ray of this light go forth every day from our soul, we may then be content. It matters not where the light falls. There is not a thing in this world whereupon your glance or your thought can rest but contains within it more treasure than either of these can fathom; nor is there a thing so small but it has a vastness within that the light that a soul can spare can, at best, but faintly illumine.

§ 86.

Is not the very essence of human destiny, stripped of the details that bewilder us, to be found in the most ordinary lives? The mighty struggle of morality on the heights is glorious to witness; but so will a keen observer profoundly admire a magnificent tree that stands alone in a desert, and, his contemplation over, once

more go back to the forest, where there are no marvellous trees, but trees in countless abundance. The immense forest is doubtless made up of ordinary branches and stems; but is it not vast, is it not as it should be, seeing that it is the forest? Not by the exceptional shall the last word ever be spoken; and indeed what we call the sublime should be only a clearer, profounder insight into all that is perfectly normal. It is of service, often, to watch those on the peaks who do battle; but it is well, too, not to forget those in the valley below, who fight not at all. As we see all that happens to these whose life knows no struggle; as we realise how much must be conquered in us before we can rightly distinguish their narrower joys from the joy known to them who are striving on high, then perhaps does the struggle itself appear to become less important; but, for all that, we love it the more. And the

reward is the sweeter to us for the silence that enwraps its coming; nor is this from a desire to keep our happiness secret — such as a crafty courtier might feel who hugs fortune's favours to him — but, perhaps, because it is only when happiness thus whispers low in our ear, and no other men know, that it is not according us joys that are filched from our brother's share. Then do we no longer say to ourselves, as we look on those brothers: "How great is the distance between such as these and myself," but in all simplicity do we murmur at last to ourselves: "The loftier my thoughts become, the less is there to divide me from the humblest of my fellow-creatures, from those who are most plentiful on earth; and every step that I take towards an uncertain ideal, is a step that brings me the nearer to those whom I once despised, in the vanity and ignorance of my earliest days."

After all, what is a humble life? It is thus we choose to term the life that ignores itself, that drains itself dry in the place of its birth — a life whose feelings and thoughts, whose desires and passions, entwine themselves around the most insignificant things. But it suffices to look at a life for that life to seem great. A life in itself can be neither great nor small; the largeness is all in the eye that surveys it; and an existence that all men hold to be lofty and vast, is one that has long been accustomed to look loftily on itself from within. If you have never done this, your life must be narrow; but the man who watches you live will discern, in the very obscurity of the corner you fill, an element of horizon, a foothold to cling to, whence his thoughts will rise with surer and more human strength. There is not an existence about us but at first seems colourless,

dreary, lethargic: what can our soul have in common with that of an elderly spinster, a slow-witted ploughman, a miser who worships his gold? Can any connection exist between such as these and a deep-rooted feeling, a boundless love for humanity, an interest time cannot stale? But let a Balzac step forward and stand in the midst of them, with his eyes and ears on the watch; and the emotion that lived and died in an old-fashioned country parlour shall as mightily stir our heart, shall as unerringly find its way to the deepest sources of life, as the majestic passion that ruled the life of a king and shed its triumphant lustre from the dazzling height of a throne. "There are certain little agitations," says Balzac in the *Curé de Tours*, the most admirable of all his studies of humble life — "there are certain little agitations that are capable of generating as much passion within the

soul as would suffice to direct the most important social interests. Is it not a mistake to imagine that time only flies swiftly with those whose hearts are devoured by mighty schemes, which fret and fever their life? Not an hour sped past the Abbé Troubert but was as animated, as laden with its burden of anxious thought, as lined with pleading hope and deep despair, as could be the most desperate hour of gambler, plotter, or lover. God alone can tell how much energy is consumed in the triumphs we achieve over men, and things, and ourselves. We may not be always aware whither our steps are leading, but are only too fully conscious of the wearisomeness of the journey. And yet — if the historian may be permitted to lay aside, for one moment, the story he is telling, and to assume the rôle of the critic — as you cast your eyes on the lives of these old maids and

these two priests, seeking to learn the cause of the sorrow which twisted their heartstrings, it will be revealed to you, perhaps, that certain passions must be experienced by man for there to develop within him the qualities that make a life noble, that widen its area, and stifle the egoism natural to all."

He speaks truly. Not for its own sake, always, should we love the light, but for the sake of what it illumines. The fire on the mountain shines brightly, but there are few men on the mountain; and more service may often be rendered by the torchlight, there where the crowd is. It is in the humble lives that is found the substance of great lives; and by watching the narrowest feelings does enlargement come to our own. Nor is this from any repugnance these feelings inspire, but because they no longer accord with the majestic truth that controls us.

It is well to have visions of a better life than that of every day, but it is the life of every day from which elements of a better life must come. We are told we should fix our eyes on high, far above life; but perhaps it is better still that our soul should look straight before it, and that the heights whereupon it should yearn to lay all its hopes and its dreams should be the mountain peaks that stand clearly out from the clouds that gild the horizon.

§ 87.

This brings us back once again to external destiny; but the tears that external suffering wrings from us are not the only tears known to man. The sage whom we love must dwell in the midst of all human passions, for only on the passions known to the heart can his wisdom safely

be nourished. They are nature's artisans, sent by her to help us construct the palace of our consciousness — of our happiness, in other words; and he who rejects these workers, deeming that he is able, unaided, to raise all the stones of life, will be compelled for ever to lodge his soul in a bare and gloomy cell. The wise man learns to purify his passions; to stifle them can never be proof of wisdom. And, indeed, these things are all governed by the position we take as we stand on the stairs of time. To some of us moral infirmities are so many stairs tending downwards; to others they represent steps that lead us on high. The wise man perchance may do things that are done by the unwise man also; but the latter is forced by his passions to become the abject slave of his instincts, whereas the sage's passions will end by illumining much that was vague in his consciousness. To love madly,

perhaps, is not wise; still, should he love madly, more wisdom will doubtless come to him than if he had always loved wisely. It is not wisdom, but the most useless form of pride that can flourish in vacancy and inertia. It is not enough to know what should be done, not though we can unerringly declare what saint or hero would do. Such things a book can teach in a day. It is not enough to intend to live a noble life and then retire to a cell, there to brood over this intention. No wisdom thus acquired can truly guide or beautify the soul; it is of as little avail as the counsels that others can offer. "It is in the silence that follows the storm," says a Hindu proverb, "and not in the silence before it, that we should search for the budding flower."

§ 88.

The earnest wayfarer along the paths of life does but become the more deeply convinced, as his travels extend, of the beauty, the wisdom, and truth of the simplest and humblest laws of existence. Their uniformity, the mere fact of their being so general, such matter of every day, are in themselves enough to compel his admiration. And little by little he holds the abnormal ever less highly, and neither seeks nor desires it; for it is soon borne home to him, as he reflects on the vastness of nature, with her slow, monotonous movement, that the ridiculous pretensions our ignorance and vanity put forth are the most truly abnormal of all. He no longer vexes the hours as they pass with prayer for strange or marvellous adventure; for these come only to such as

have not yet learned to have faith in life and themselves. He no longer awaits, with folded arms, the chance for superhuman effort; for he feels that he exists in every act that is human. He no longer requires that death, or friendship, or love should come to him decked out with garlands illusion has woven, or escorted by omen, coincidence, presage; but they come in their bareness and simpleness, and are always sure of his welcome. He believes that all that the weak, and the idle, and thoughtless consider sublime and exceptional, that the full equivalent for the most heroic deed, can be found in the simple life that is bravely and wholly faced. He no longer considers himself the chosen son of the universe; but his happiness, consciousness, peace of mind, have gained all that his pride has lost. And, this point once attained, then will the miraculous

adventures of a St. Theresa or Jean-de-la-Croix, the ecstasy of the mystics, the supernatural incidents of legendary loves, the star of an Alexander or a Napoleon — then will all these seem the merest childish illusions compared with the healthy wisdom of a loyal, earnest man, who has no craving to soar above his fellows so as to feel what they cannot feel, but whose heart and brain find the light that they need in the unchanging feelings of all. The truest man will never be he who desires to be other than man. How many there are that thus waste their lives, scouring the heavens for sight of the comet that never will come; but disdaining to look at the stars, because these can be seen by all, and, moreover, are countless in number! This craving for the extraordinary is often the special weakness of ordinary men, who fail to perceive that the more normal,

and ordinary, and uniform events may appear to us, the more are we able to appreciate the profound happiness that this uniformity enfolds, and the nearer are we drawn to the truth and tranquillity of the great force by which we have being. What can be less abnormal than the ocean, which covers two-thirds of the globe; and yet, what is there more vast? There is not a thought or a feeling, not an act of beauty or nobility, whereof man is capable, but can find complete expression in the simplest, most ordinary life; and all that cannot be expressed therein must of necessity belong to the falsehoods of vanity, ignorance, or sloth.

§ 89.

Does this mean that the wise man should expect no more from life than other men: that he should love mediocrity and limit

his desires; content himself with little and restrict the horizon of his happiness, because of the fear lest happiness escape him? By no means; for the wisdom is halting and sickly that can too freely renounce a legitimate human hope. Many desires in man may be legitimate still, notwithstanding the disapproval of reason, sometimes unduly severe. But the fact that our happiness does not seem extraordinary to those about us by no means warrants our thinking that we are not happy. The wiser we are, the more readily do we perceive that happiness lies in our grasp; that it has no more enviable gift than the uneventful moments it brings. The sage has learnt to quicken and love the silent substance of life. In this silent substance only can faithful joys be found, for abnormal happiness never ventures to go with us to the tomb. The day that comes and goes without special

whisper of hope or happiness should be as dear to us, and as welcome, as any one of its brothers. On its way to us it has traversed the same worlds and the self-same space as the day that finds us on a throne or enthralled by a mighty love. The hours are less dazzling, perhaps, that its mantle conceals; but at least we may rely more fully on their humble devotion. There are as many eternal minutes in the week that goes by in silence, as in the one that comes boldly towards us with mighty shout and clamour. And indeed it is we who tell ourselves all that the hour would seem to say; for the hour that abides with us is ever a timid and nervous guest, that will smile if its host be smiling, or weep if his eyes be wet. It has been charged with no mission to bring happiness to us; it is we who should comfort the hour that has sought refuge within our soul. And he is wise who always

finds words of peace that he can whisper low to his guest on the threshold. We should let no opportunity for happiness escape us, and the simplest causes of happiness should be ever stored in our soul. It is well, at first, to know happiness as men conceive it, so that, later, we may have good reason for preferring the happiness of our choice. For, herein, it is not unlike what we are told of love. To know what real love should be we must have loved profoundly, and that first love must have fled. It is well to know moments of material happiness, since they teach us where to look for loftier joys; and all that we gain, perhaps, from listening to the hours that babble aloud in their wantonness is that we are slowly learning the language of the hours whose voice is hushed. And of these there are many; they come in battalions, so close on the heels of each

other that treachery and flight cannot be; wherefore it is on them alone that the sage should depend. For he will be happy whose eyes have learned to detect the hidden smile and mysterious jewels of the myriad, nameless hours; and where are these jewels to be found, if not in ourselves?

§ 90.

But there is a kind of ignoble discretion that has least in common, of all things, with the wisdom we speak of here; for we had far better spend our energy round even fruitless happiness, than slumber by the fireside awaiting joys that never may come. Only the joys that have been offered to all, and none have accepted, will knock at his door who refuses himself to stir forth. Nor is the other man wise who holds the reins too tight on his feelings,

and halts them when reason commands, or experience whispers. The friend is not wise who will not confide in his friend, remembering always that friendships may come to an end; nor the lover, who draws back for fear lest he may find shipwreck in love. For here, were we twenty times unfortunate, it is still only the perishable portion of our energy for happiness that suffers; and what is wisdom after all but this same energy for happiness cleansed of all that is impure? To be wise we must first learn to be happy, that we may attach ever smaller importance to what happiness may be in itself. We should be as happy as possible, and our happiness should last as long as is possible; for those who can finally issue forth from self by the portal of happiness, know infinitely wider freedom than those who pass through the gate of sadness. The joy of the sage illumines his heart and his soul alike,

whereas sadness most often throws light on the heart alone. One might almost compare the man who had never been happy with a traveller whose every journey had been taken by night. Moreover, there is in happiness a humility deeper and nobler, purer and wider, than sorrow can ever procure. There is a certain humility that ranks with parasitic virtues, such as sterile self-sacrifice, arbitrary chastity, blind submission, fanatic renouncement, penitence, false shame, and many others, which have from time immemorial turned aside from their course the waters of human morality, and forced them into a stagnant pool, around which our memory still lingers. Nor do I speak of a cunning humility that is often mere calculation, or, taken at its best, a timidity that has its root in pride — a loan at usury that our vanity of to-day extends to our vanity of to-morrow. And even

the sage at times conceives it well to lower himself in his own self-esteem, and to deny superior merits that are his when comparing himself with other men. Humility of this kind may throw a charm around our ways of life, but yet, sincere as it doubtless may be, it nevertheless attacks the loyalty due to ourselves, which we should value high above all. And it surely implies a certain timidity of conscience; whereas the conscience of the sage should harbour neither timidity nor shame. But by the side of this too personal humility there exists another humility that extends to all things, that is lofty and strong, that has fed on all that is best in our brain and our heart and our soul. It is a humility that defines the limit of the hopes and adventures of men; that lessens us only to add to the grandeur of all we behold; that teaches us where we should look for the true importance of man,

which lies not in that which he is, but in that which his eyes can take in, which he strives to accept and to grasp. It is true that sorrow will also bring us to the realm of this humility; but it hastens us through, branching off on the road to a mysterious gate of hope, on whose threshold we lose many days; whereas happiness, that after the first few hours has nothing else left to do, will lead us in silence through path after path till we reach the most unforeseen, inaccessible places of all. It is when the sage knows he possesses at last all man is allowed to possess, that he begins to perceive that it is his manner of regarding what man may never possess, that determines the value of such things as he truly may call his own. And therefore must we long have sunned ourselves in the rays of happiness before we can truly conceive an independent view of life. We must be

happy, not for happiness' sake, but so that we may learn to see distinctly that which vain expectation of happiness would for ever hide from our gaze.

§ 91.

Economy avails us nothing in the region of the heart, for it is there that men gather the harvest of life's very substance; it were better that nothing were done there than that things should be done by halves; and that which we have not dared to risk is most surely lost of all. To limit our passions is only to limit ourselves, and we are the losers by just so much as we hoped to gain. There are certain fastnesses within our soul that lie buried so deep that love alone dare venture down; and it returns laden with undreamed-of jewels, whose lustre can only be seen as they pass from our open hand to the hand of one

we love. And indeed it would seem that so clear a light springs from our hands as they open thus to give, that it penetrates substance too opaque to yield to the mysterious rays just discovered.

§ 92.

It avails us nothing unduly to bemoan our errors or losses. For happen what may to the man of simple faith, still, at the last minute of the sorrow-laden hour, at the end of the week or year, still will he find some cause for gladness as he turns his eyes within. Little by little he has learned to regret without tears. He is as a father might be who returns to his home in the evening, his day's work done. He may find his children in tears perhaps, or playing dangerous, forbidden games; the furniture scattered, glasses broken, a lamp overturned; but

shall he therefore despair? It would certainly have been better had the children been more obedient, had they quietly learned their lessons — this would have been more in keeping with every moral theory; but how unreasonable the father who, in the midst of his harsh rebuke, could withhold a smile as he turned his head away! The children have acted unwisely, perhaps, in their exuberance of life; but why should this distress him? All is well, so long as he return home at night, so long as he ever keep about him the key of the guardian dwelling. As we look into ourselves, and pass in review what our heart, and brain, and soul have attempted and carried through while we were away, the benefit lies far more in the searching glance itself than in the actual inspection. And if the hours have not once let fall their mysterious girdle on their way past our threshold; if the rooms be

as empty as on the day of departure, and those within have but sat with folded arms and worked not at all — still, as we enter, shall something be learned from our echoing footsteps, of the extent, and the clearness, and the fidelity, of our home.

§ 93.

No day can be uneventful, save in ourselves alone; but in the day that seems most uneventful of all, there is still room for the loftiest destiny; for there is far more scope for such destiny within ourselves than on the whole continent of Europe. Not by the extent of empire is the range of destiny governed, but, indeed, by the depth of our soul. It is in our conception of life that real destiny is found; when at last there is delicate balance between the insoluble questions of

heaven and the wavering response of our soul. And these questions become the more tranquil as they seem to comprise more and more; and to the sage, whatever may happen will still widen the scope of the questions, still give deeper confidence to the reply. Speak not of destiny when the event that has brought you joy or sadness has still altered nothing in your manner of regarding the universe. All that remains to us when love and glory are over, when adventures and passions have faded into the past, is but a deeper and ever-deepening sense of the infinite; and if we have not that within us, then are we destitute indeed. And this sense of the infinite is more than a mere assemblage of thoughts, which, indeed, are but the innumerable steps that thither lead. There is no happiness in happiness itself, unless it help our comprehension of the rest, unless it help us in some measure to

conceive that the very universe itself must rejoice in existence. The sage who has attained a certain height will find peace in all things that happen; and the event that saddens him, as other men, tarries but an instant ere it goes to strengthen his deep perception of life. He who has learned to see in all things only matter for unselfish wonder, can be deprived of no satisfaction whatever without there spring to sudden life within him, from the mere feeling that this joy can be dispensed with, a high protecting thought that enfolds him in its light. That destiny is beautiful wherein each event, though charged with joy or sadness, has brought reflection to us, has added something to our range of soul, has given us greater peace wherewith to cling to life. And, indeed, the accident that robs us of our love, that leads us along in triumph, or even that seats us on a throne, reveals

but little of the workings of destiny; which, indeed, lie far more in the thoughts that arise in our mind as we look at the men around us, at the woman we love; as we dwell on the feelings within us; as we fix our eyes on the evening sky with its crown of indifferent stars.

§ 94.

A woman of extraordinary beauty and talent, possessed of the rarest qualities of mind and soul, was one day asked by a friend, to whom she seemed the most perfect creature on earth: "What are your plans? Can any man be worthy of your love? Your future puzzles me. I cannot conceive a destiny that shall be lofty enough for a soul such as yours." He knew but little of destiny. To him, as to most men, it meant thrones, triumphs, dazzling adventures: these

things seemed to him the sum of a human destiny; whereby he did but prove that he knew not what destiny was. And, in the first place, why this disdain of to-day? To disdain to-day is to prove that yesterday has been misunderstood. To disdain to-day is to declare oneself a stranger, and what can you hope to do in a world where you shall ever pass as a stranger? To-day has this advantage over yesterday, that it exists and was made for us. Be to-day what it will, it has wider knowledge than yesterday; and by that alone does it become more beautiful, and vaster. Why should we think that the woman I speak of would have known a more brilliant destiny in Venice, Florence, or Rome? Her presence might have been sought at magnificent festival, and her beauty have found a fitting surrounding in exquisite landscape. She might have had princes

and kings, the elect of the world, at her feet; and perhaps it had needed but one of her smiles to add to a great nation's gladness, to ennoble or chasten the thought of an epoch. Whereas here all her life will be spent among four or five people — four or five souls that know of her soul, and love her. It may be that she never shall stir from her dwelling; that of her life, of her thoughts, and the strength that is in her, there will remain not a trace among men. It may be that her beauty, her force and her instinct for good, will be buried within her: in her heart and the hearts of the few who are near. And even then, and if this be so, the soul of this woman doubtless shall find its own thing to do. The mighty gates through which we must pass to a helpful and noteworthy life no longer grate on their hinges with the deafening clamour of old. They are smaller,

perhaps, than they were; less vast and imposing; but their number is greater to-day, and they admit us, in silence, to paths that extend very far. And even though the home of this woman be not brightened by one single gleam from without, will she have failed to fulfil her destiny because her life is lived in the shade? Cannot destiny be beautiful and complete in itself, without help from without? As the soul that has truly conquered surveys the triumphs of the past, it is glad of those only that brought with them a deeper knowledge of life and a nobler humility; of those that lent sweeter charm to the moments when love, glory, and enthusiasm having faded away, the fruit that a few hours of boiling passion had ripened was gathered in meditation and silence. When the feasting is over: when charity, kindness and valorous deed all lie far behind us: what is there left to the soul

but some stray recollections, a gain of some consciousness, and a feeling that helps us to look on our place in the world with more knowledge and less apprehension — a feeling blent with some wisdom, from the numberless things it has learned? When the hour for rest has sounded — as it must sound every night and at every moment of solitude — when the gaudy vestments of love, and glory, and power fall helplessly round us; what is it we can take with us as we seek refuge within ourselves, where the happiness of each day is measured by the knowledge the day has brought us, by the thoughts and the confidence it has helped us to acquire? Is our true destiny to be found in the things which take place about us, or in that which abides in our soul? "Be a man's power or glory never so great," said a philosopher, "his soul soon learns how to value

the feelings that spring from external events; and as he perceives that no increase has come to his physical faculties, that these remain wholly unchanged, neither altered nor added to, then does the sense of his nothingness burst full upon him. The king who should govern the world must still, like the rest of his brothers, revolve in a limited circle, whose every law must be obeyed; and on his impressions and thoughts must his happiness wholly depend." The impressions his memory retains, we might add, because they have chastened his mind; for the souls that we deal with here will retain such impressions only as have quickened their sense of goodness, as have made them a little more noble. Is it impossible to find — it matters not where, nor how great be the silence — the same undissolvable matter that lurks in the cup of the noblest external existence? and seeing that

nothing is truly our own till it faithfully follow us into the darkness and silence, why should the thing that has sprung to life there be less faithful in silence and darkness? But we will pursue this no farther, for it leads to a wisdom of overmuch theory. For all that a brilliant exterior destiny is not indispensable, still should we always regard it as wholly desirable, and pursue it as keenly as though we valued it highly. It behoves the sage to knock at the door of every temple of glory, of every dwelling where happiness, love, and activity are to be found. And if his strenuous effort and long expectation remain unrewarded, if no door fly open, still may he find, perhaps, in the mere expectation and effort an equivalent for all the emotions and light that he sought. "To act," says Barrès, "is to annex to our thoughts vaster fields of experience." It is also, perhaps, to think

more quickly than thought, as more completely; for we no longer think with the brain alone, but with every atom of life. It is to wrap round with dream the profoundest sources of thought, and then to confront them with fact. But to act is not always to conquer. To attempt, to be patient, and wait — these, too, may be action; as also, to hear, to watch, and be silent.

If the lot of the woman we speak of had been cast in Athens, or Florence, or Rome, there had been, in her life, certain motives of grandeur, occasions for beauty and happiness, that she may well never meet with to-day. And she is the poorer for lacking the efforts she might have put forth, the memory of what might have been done; for in these lies a force that is precious and vital, that often indeed will transform many more things within us, than a thought which is morally,

mentally worth many thousand such efforts and memories. And indeed it is therefore alone that we should desire a brilliant, feverish destiny; because it summons to life certain forces and feelings that would otherwise never emerge from the slumberous peace of an over-tranquil existence. But from the moment we know, or even suspect, that these feelings lie dormant within us, we are already giving life to all that is best in those feelings; and it is as though we were, for one brief moment, looking down upon a glorious external destiny from heights such destiny shall only attain at the end of its days; as though we were prematurely gathering the fruit of the tree, which it shall itself still find barren until many a storm has passed.

§ 95.

Last night, re-reading Saint-Simon — with whom we seem to ascend a lofty tower, whence our gaze rests on hundreds of human destinies, astir in the valley below — I understood what a beautiful destiny meant to the instinct of man. It would doubtless have puzzled Saint-Simon himself to have told what it was that he loved and admired in some of his heroes, whom he enwraps in a sort of resigned, and almost unconscious, respect. Thousands of virtues that he esteemed highly have ceased to exist to-day, and many a quality now seems petty indeed that he commended in some of his great ones. And yet are there, unperceived as it were by him, four or five men in the midst of the glittering crowd hard by the monarch's throne, four or five earnest benevolent faces

on whom our eye still rests gladly; though Saint-Simon gives them no special attention or thought, for in his heart he looks with disfavour on the ideas that govern their life. Fénelon is there; the Dukes of Chevreuse and Beauvilliers; there is Monsieur le Dauphin. Their happiness is no greater than that of the rest of mankind. They achieve no marked success, they gain no resplendent victory. They live as the others live — in the fret and expectation of the thing that we choose to call happiness, because it has yet to come. Fénelon incurs the displeasure of the crafty, bigoted king, who, for all his pride, would resent the most trivial offence with the humbleness of humblest vanity; who was great in small things, and petty in all that was great — for such was Louis XIV. Fénelon is condemned, persecuted, exiled. The Dukes of Chevreuse and Beauvilliers

continue to hold important office at Court, but none the less deem it prudent to live in a kind of voluntary retirement. The Dauphin is not in favour with the King; a powerful, envious clique are for ever intriguing against him, and they finally succeed in crushing his youthful military glory. He lives in the midst of disgrace, misadventure, disaster, that seem irreparable in the eyes of that vain and servile Court; for disgrace and disaster assume the proportions the manners of the day accord. Finally he dies, a few days after the death of the wife he had loved so tenderly. He dies — poisoned, perhaps, as she too; the thunderbolt falling just as the very first rays of kingly favour, whereon he had almost ceased to count, were stealing over his threshold. Such were the troubles and misfortunes, the sorrows and disappointments, that wrapped these lives round;

and yet, as we look on this little group, standing firm and silent in the midst of the feverish, intermittent glitter of the rest, then do these four destinies seem truly beautiful to us, and enviable. Through all their vicissitudes one common light shines through them. The great soul of Fénelon illumines them all. Fénelon is faithful to his loftiest thoughts of piety, meekness, wonder, justice, and love; and the other three are faithful to him, who was their master and friend. And what though the mystic ideas of Fénelon be no longer shared by us: what though the ideas that we cling to ourselves, and deem the profoundest and noblest — the ideas that live at the root of our every conviction of life, that have served as the basis of all our moral happiness — what though these should one day fall in ruins behind us, and only arouse a smile among such as

believe that they have found other thoughts still, which to them seem more human, and final? Thought, of itself, is possessed of no vital importance; it is the feelings awakened within us by thought that ennoble and brighten our life. Thought is our aim, perhaps; but it may be with this as with many a journey we take — the place we are bound for may interest us less than the journey itself, the people we meet on the road, the unforeseen that may happen. Here, as everywhere, it is only the sincerity of human feeling that abides. As for a thought, we know not, it may be deceptive; but the love, wherewith we have loved it, will surely return to our soul; nor can a single drop of its clearness or strength be abstracted by error. Of that perfect ideal that each of us strives to build up in himself, the sum total of all our thoughts will help only to model the outline; but the elements that

go to construct it, and keep it alive, are the purified passion, unselfishness, loyalty, wherein these thoughts have had being. The extent of our love for the thing which we hold to be true is of greater importance than even the truth itself. Does not love bring more goodness to us than thought can ever convey? Loyally to love a great error may well be more helpful than meanly to serve a great truth; for in doubt, no less than in faith, are passion and love to be found. Some doubts are as generous and passionate as the very noblest convictions. Be a thought of the loftiest, surest, or of the most profoundly uncertain, the best that it has to offer is still the chance that it gives us of loving some one thing wholly, without reserve. Whether it be to man, or a God; to country, to world or to error, that I truly do yield myself up, the precious ore that shall some day be found buried deep

in the ashes of love will have sprung from the love itself, and not from the thing that I loved. The sincerity of an attachment, its simplicity, firmness, and zeal — these leave a track behind them that time can never efface. All passes away and changes; it may be that all is lost, save only the glow of this ardour, fertility, and strength of our heart.

§ 96.

"Never did man possess his soul in such peace as he," says Saint-Simon of one of them, who was surrounded on all sides by malice, and scheming, and snares. And further on he speaks of the "wise tranquillity" of another, and this "wise tranquillity" pervades every one of those whom he terms the "little flock." The "little flock," truly, of fidelity to all that was noblest in thought; the "little flock" of

friendship, loyalty, self-respect, and inner contentment, that pass along, radiant with peace and simplicity, in the midst of the lies and ambitions, the follies and treacheries, of Versailles. They are not saints, in the vulgar sense of the word. They have not fled to the depths of forest or desert, or sought egotistic shelter in narrow cells. They are sages, who remain within life and the things that are real. It is not their piety that saves them; it is not in God alone that their soul has found strength. To love God, and to serve Him with all one's might, will not suffice to bring peace and strength to the soul of man. It is only by means of the knowledge and thought we have gained and developed by contact with men that we can learn how God should be loved; for, notwithstanding all things, the human soul remains profoundly human still. It may be taught to cherish the invisible, but

it will ever find far more actual nourishment in the virtue or feeling that is simply and wholly human, than in the virtue or passion divine. If there come towards us a man whose soul is truly tranquil and calm, we may be certain that human virtues have given him his tranquillity and his calmness. Were we permitted to peer into the secret recesses of hearts that are now no more, we might discover, perhaps, that the fountain of peace whereat Fénelon slaked his thirst every night of his exile lay rather in his loyalty to Madame Guyon in her misfortune, in his love for the slandered, persecuted Dauphin, than in his expectation of eternal reward; rather in the irreproachable human conscience within him, overflowing with fidelity and tenderness, than in the hopes he cherished as a Christian.

§ 97.

Admirable indeed is the serenity of this "little flock!" No virtue, here, to kindle dazzling fires on the mountain, but heart and soul that are alive with flame. No heroism but that of love, of confidence and sincerity, that remember and are content to wait. Some men there are whose virtue issues from them with a noise of clanging gates; in others it dwells as silent as the maid who never stirs from home, who sits thoughtfully by the fireside, always ready to welcome those who enter from the cold without. There is less need of heroic hours, perhaps, in a beautiful life, than of weeks that are grave, and uniform, and pure. It may be that the soul that is loyal and perfectly just is more precious than the one that is tender or full of devotion.

It will enter less wholly perhaps, and with less exaltation, into the more exuberant adventures of life; but in the events that occur every day we can trust it more fully, rely more completely upon it; and is there a man, after all, no matter how strange and delirious and brilliant his life may have been, who has not spent the great bulk of his time in the midst of most ordinary incident? In our very sublimest hour, as we stand in the midst of the dazzling circles it throws, are we not startled to find that the habits and thoughts of our soberest hour are whirling around with the rest? We must always come back to our normal life, that is built on the solid earth and primitive rock. We are not called upon to contest each day with dishonour, despair, or death; but it is imperative, perhaps, that I should be able to tell myself, at every hour of sadness, that

there exists, somewhere, an unchangeable, unconquerable soul that has drawn near to my soul — a soul that is faithful and silent, blind to all that it deems not conformable with the truth. We can only have praise for heroism, and for surpassingly generous deeds; but more praise still — as it demands a more vigilant strength — for the man who never allows an inferior thought to seduce him; who leads a less glorious life, perhaps, but one of more uniform worth. Let us sometimes, in our meditations, bring our desire for moral perfection to the level of daily truth, and be taught how far easier it is to confer occasional benefit than never to do any harm; to bring occasional happiness than never be cause of tears.

§ 98.

Their refuge, their "firm rock," as Saint-Simon calls it, lay in each other, and, above all, in themselves; and all that was blameless within their soul became steadfastness in the rock. A thousand substances go to form the foundations of this "firm rock," but all that we hold to be blameless within us will sink to its centre and base. It is true that our standard of conduct may often be sadly at fault; and the vilest of men has a moment each night when he proudly surveys some detestable thought, that seems wholly blameless to him. But I speak of a virtue, here, that is higher than everyday virtue; and the most ordinary man is aware what a virtue becomes, when it is ordinary virtue no longer. Moral beauty, indeed, though

it be of the rarest kind, never passes the comprehension of the most narrow-minded of men; and no act is so readily understood as the act that is truly sublime. We may admire a deed profoundly, perhaps, and yet not rise to its height; but it is imperative that we should not abide in the darkness that covers the thing we blame. Many a happiness in life, as many a disaster, is due to chance alone; but the peace within us can never be governed by chance. Some souls, I know, for ever are building; others have preference for ruins; and others, still, will wander, their whole life through, seeking shelter beneath strange roofs. And difficult as it may be to transform the instincts that dwell in the soul, it is well that those who build not should be made aware of the joy that the others experience as they incessantly pile stone upon stone. Their thoughts, and attachments,

and love; their convictions, deceptions, and even their doubts — all stand in good service; and when the passing storm has demolished their mansion, they build once again with the ruins, a little distance away, something less stately perhaps, but better adapted to all the requirements of life. What regret, disillusion, or sadness can shatter the homestead of him who, in choosing the stones for his dwelling, was careful to keep all the wisdom and strength that regret, disillusion, and sadness contain? Or might we not say that it is with the roots of the happiness we cherish within as with roots of great trees? The oaks that are subject the most to the stress of the storm thrust their roots the most staunchly and firmly, deep down in eternal soil; and the fate that unjustly pursues us is no more aware of what comes to pass in our soul, than the wind is aware of what happens below in the earth.

§ 99.

Here let us note how great is the power, how mysterious the attraction, of veritable happiness. Something of a hush comes over Saint-Simon's stirring narrative as one of the members of the "little flock" passes through the careless, triumphant crowd, unceasingly busy with intrigue and salutation, petty love and petty triumph, amidst the marble staircases and magnificent halls of Versailles. Saint-Simon goes calmly on with his story; but for one second we seem to have compared all this jubilant vanity and ephemeral rejoicing, this brazen-tongued falsehood that secretly trembles, with the serene, unvarying loftiness of those strenuous, tranquil souls. It is as though there should suddenly appear in the midst of a band of children — who are plucking flowers, it may be,

stealing fruit, or playing forbidden games — a priest or an aged man, who should go on his way, letting fall not one word of rebuke. The games are suddenly stopped; startled conscience awakens; and unbidden thoughts of duty, reality, truth, rush in on the mind; but with men no more than with children are impressions of long duration, though they spring from the priest, or the sage, or only the thought that has passed and gone on its way. But it matters not, they have seen; and the human soul, for all that the eyes are only too willing to close or turn away, is nobler than most men would wish it to be, for it often troubles their peace; and the soul is quick to declare its preference for that it has seen, and fain would abandon its enforced and wearisome idleness. And although we may smile and make merry as the sage disappears in the distance, he

has, though he know it not, left a clear track in the midst of our error and folly, where, haply, it still will abide for a long time to come. And when the sudden hour of tears bursts upon us, then most of all shall we see it enwrapped in light. We find again and again, in Saint-Simon's story, that sorrow no sooner invades a soul somewhat loftier than others, somewhat nearer to life perhaps, than it speedily flies for comfort to one it has thus seen pass by in the midst of the uneasy silence and almost malevolent wonder, that in this world too often attend the footsteps of a blameless life. It is not our wont to question happiness closely in the days when we deem ourselves happy; but when sorrow draws nigh, our memory flies to the peace that somewhere lies hidden: the peace that depends not on the rays of the sun, or the kiss that has been withheld, or the disapproval of kings. At such moments

we go not to those who are happy, as we once were happy; for we know that this happiness melts away before the first fretful gesture of fate. Would you learn where true happiness dwells, you have only to watch the movements of those who are wretched, and seek consolation. Sorrow is like the divining-rod that used to avail the seekers of treasure or of clear running water; for he who may have it about him unerringly makes for the house where profoundest peace has its home. And this is so true that we should be wise, perhaps, not to dwell with too much satisfaction on our own peace of mind and tranquillity, on the sincerity of our own acquiescence in the great laws of life, or rely too complacently on the duration of our own happiness, until such time as the instinct of those who suffer impels them to knock at our door, and their eyes can behold, shining bright

on the threshold, the steady, unwavering flame of the lamp that burns on for ever. Yes; only they, it may be, have the right to deem themselves safe to whose arms there come to weep those whose eyes are heavy with tears. And indeed there are not a few in this world whose inner smile we can only behold when our eyes have been cleansed by the tears that lay bare the mysterious sources of vision; and then only do we begin to detect the presence of happiness that springs not from the favour or gleam of an hour, but from widest acceptance of life. Here, as in much beside, desire and necessity quicken our senses. The hungry bee will discover the honey, be it hid never so deep in the cavern; and the soul that mourns will spy out the joy that lies hidden in its retreat, or in most impenetrable silence.

§ 100.

Destiny begins when consciousness wakes and bestirs itself within man; not the passive, impoverished consciousness of most souls, but the active consciousness that will accept the event, whatever it may be, as an imprisoned queen will accept a gift that is offered to her in her cell. If nothing should happen, your consciousness yet may create important event from the manner in which it regards the mere dearth of event; but perhaps to each man there occurs vastly more than is needed to satisfy the thirstiest, most indefatigable consciousness. I have at this moment before me the history of a mighty and passionate soul, whom every adventure that makes for the sorrow or gladness of man would seem to have passed by with averted

head. It is of Emily Brontë I speak, than whom the first fifty years of this century produced no woman of greater or more incontestable genius. She has left but one book behind her, a novel, called "Wuthering Heights," a curious title, which seems to suggest a storm on a mountain peak. She was the daughter of an English clergyman, the Rev. Patrick Brontë, who was the most insignificant, selfish, lethargic, pretentious creature the mind can conceive. There were only two things in life that seemed of importance to him — the purity of his Greek profile, and solicitude for his digestion. As for Emily's unfortunate mother, her whole life would seem to have been spent in admiring this Greek profile and in studying this digestion. But there is scarcely need to dwell upon her existence, for she died only two years after Emily's birth. It is of interest to

note, however — if only to prove once again that, in ordinary life, the woman is usually superior to the man she has had to accept — that long after the death of the patient wife a bundle of letters was found, wherein it was clearly revealed that she who had always been silent was fully alive to the indifference and fatuous self-love of her vain and indolent husband. We may, it is true, be conscious of faults in others from which we are ourselves not exempt; although to discover a virtue, perhaps, we must needs have a germ of it in us. Such were Emily's parents. Around her, four sisters and one brother gravely watched the monotonous flight of the hours. The family dwelling, where Emily's whole life was spent, was in the heart of the Yorkshire Moors, at a place called Haworth, a gloomy, desolate village; barren, forsaken, and lonely.

There can never have been a childhood and youth so friendless, monotonous, and dreary as that of Emily and her sisters. There came to them none of those happy little adventures, bright gleams from the unexpected, which we broider and magnify as the years go by, and store at last in our soul as the one inexhaustible treasure acquired by the smiling memory of life. Each day was the same, from first to last — lessons, meals, household duties, work beside an old aunt, and long solitary walks that these grave little girls would take hand in hand, speaking but seldom, across the heather now gay with blossom, now white beneath the snow. At home the father they scarcely saw, who was wholly indifferent, who took his meals in his room, and would come down at night to the rectory parlour and read aloud the appallingly dreary debates of the House of Commons;

without, the silence of the adjoining graveyard, the great treeless desert, and the moors that from autumn to summer were swept by the pitiless wind from the north.

The hazard of life — for in every life some effort is put forth by fate — the hazard of life removed Emily three or four times from the desert she had grown to love, and to consider — as will happen to those who remain too long in one spot — the only place in the world where the plants, and the earth, and the sky were truly real and delightful. But after a few weeks' absence the light would fade from her ardent, beautiful eyes; she pined for home; and one or another of the sisters must hasten to bring her back to the lonely vicarage.

In 1843 — she was then twenty-five — she returned once again, never more to go forth until summoned by death.

Not an event, or a smile, or a whisper of love in the whole of her life to the day of this final return. Nor was her memory charged with one of those griefs or deceptions, which enable the weaklings, or those who demand too little of life, to imagine that passive fidelity to something that has of itself collapsed is an act of virtue; that inactivity is justified by the tears wherein it is bathed; and that the duty of life is accomplished when suffering has been made to yield up all its resignation and sorrow.

Here, in this virgin soul, whose past was a blank, there was nothing for memory or resignation to cling to; nothing before that last journey, as nothing after; unless it be mournful vigils by the side of the brother she nursed — the almost demented brother, whose life was wrecked by his idleness

and a great unfortunate passion; who became an incurable opium-eater and drunkard. Then, shortly before her twenty-ninth birthday, on a December afternoon, as she sat in the little white-washed parlour combing her long black hair, the comb slipped from the fingers that were too weak to retain it, and fell into the fire; and death came to her, more silent even than life, and bore her away from the pale embraces of the two sisters whom fortune had left her.

§ 101.

"No touch of love, no hint of fame, no hours of ease lie for you across the knees of fate," exclaims Miss Mary Robinson, who has chronicled this existence, in a fine outburst of sorrow. And truly, viewed from without, what life could be more dreary and colourless, more futile

and icily cold, than that of Emily Brontë? But where shall we take our stand, when we pass such a life in review, so as best to discover its truth, to judge it, approve it, and love it? How different it all appears as we leave the little parsonage, hidden away on the moors, and let our eyes rest on the soul of our heroine! It is rare indeed that we thus can follow the life of a soul in a body that knew no adventure; but it is less rare than might be imagined that a soul should have life of its own, which hardly depends, if at all, on incident of week or of year. In "Wuthering Heights" — wherein this soul gives to the world its passions, desires, reflections, realisations, ideals, which is, in a word, its real history — in "Wuthering Heights" there is more adventure, more passion, more energy, more ardour, more love, than is needed to give life or fulfilment to twenty heroic existences, twenty destinies

of gladness or sorrow. Not a single event ever paused as it passed by her threshold; yet did every event she could claim take place in her heart, with incomparable force and beauty, with matchless precision and detail. We say that nothing ever happened; but did not all things really happen to her much more directly and tangibly than unto most of us, seeing that everything that took place about her, everything that she saw or heard, was transformed within her into thoughts and feelings, into indulgent love, admiration, adoration of life? What matter whether the event fall on our neighbour's roof or our own? The rain-drops the cloud brings with it are for him who will hold out his vessel; and the gladness, the beauty, the peace, or the helpful disquiet that is found in the gesture of fate, belongs only to him who has learned to reflect. Love never came to her: there fell never once on her ear

the lover's magical footfall; and, for all that, this virgin, who died in her twenty-ninth year, has known love, has spoken of love, has penetrated its most impenetrable secrets to such a degree, that those who have loved the most deeply must sometimes uneasily wonder what name they should give to the passion they feel, when she pours forth the words, exaltation and mystery of a love beside which all else seems pallid and casual. Where, if not in her heart, has she heard the matchless words of the girl, who speaks to her nurse of the man who is hated and harassed by all, but whom she wholly adores? "My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, *I* should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated,

the universe would turn to a mighty stranger; I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath — a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. . . . I do not love him because he's handsome, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same." . . .

She has but little acquaintance with the external realities of love, and these she handles so innocently at times as almost to provoke a smile; but where can she have acquired her knowledge of those inner realities, that are interwoven with

all that is profoundest and most illogical in passion, with all that is most unexpected, most impossible, and most eternally true? We feel that one must have lived for thirty years beneath burning chains of burning kisses to learn what she has learned; to dare so confidently set forth, with such minuteness, such unerring certainty, the delirium of those two predestined lovers of "Wuthering Heights"; to mark the self-conflicting movements of the tenderness that would make suffer and the cruelty that would make glad, the felicity that prayed for death and the despair that clung to life; the repulsion that desired, the desire drunk with repulsion — love surcharged with hatred, hatred staggering beneath its load of love. . . .

And yet it is known to us — for in this poor life of hers all lies open — that she neither loved nor was loved. May it be true then that the last word of an

existence is only a word that destiny whispers low to what lies most hidden in our heart? Have we indeed an inner life that yields not in reality to the outer life; that is no less susceptible of experience and impression? Can we live, it matters not where, and love, and hate, listening for no footfall, spurning no creature? Is the soul self-sufficient; and is it always the soul that decides, a certain height once gained? Is it only to those whose conscience still slumbers that events can seem sad or sterile? Did not love and beauty, happiness and adventure — did not all that we go in search of along the ways of life congregate in Emily Brontë's heart? Day after day passed by, with never a joy or emotion; never a smile that the eye could see or the hand could touch; wherefore none the less did her destiny find its fulfilment, for the confidence within her, the eagerness, hope, animation,

all were astir; and her heart was flooded with light, and radiant with silent gladness. Of her happiness none can doubt. Not in the soul of the best of all those whose happiness has lasted the longest, been the most active, diversified, perfect, could more imperishable harvest be found than in the soul Emily Brontë lays bare. If to her there came nothing of all that passes in joy and in love, in sorrow, passion, and anguish, still did she possess all that abides when emotion has faded away. Which of the two will know more of the marvellous palace — the blind man who lives there, or the other, with wide-open eyes, who perhaps only enters it once? "To live, not to live" — we must not let mere words mislead us. It is surely possible to live without thought, but not to think, without active life. The essence of the joy or sorrow the event contains lies in the

idea the event gives birth to: our own idea, if we are strong; that of others, if we are weak. On your way to the grave there may come a thousand external events towards you, whereof not one, it may be, shall find within you the force that it needs to turn to moral event. Then may you truthfully say, and then only, "I have perhaps not lived." The intimate happiness of our heroine, as of every human being, was in exact proportion to her morality and her sense of the universe; and these indeed are the clearings in the forest of accidents whose area it is well we should know when we seek to measure the happiness a life has experienced. Who that had gained the altitude of peace and comprehension whereon her soul reposed would still be wrought to feeble, bitter, unrefreshing tears by the cares and troubles and deceptions of ordinary life?

Who would not then understand why it was that she shed no tears, unlike so many of her sisters, who spend their lives in plaintive wanderings from one broken joy to another? The joy that is dead weighs heavy, and bids fair to crush us, if we cause it to be with us for ever; which is as though a wood-cutter should refuse to lay down his load of dead wood. For dead wood was not made to be eternally borne on the shoulder, but indeed to be burned, and give forth brilliant flame. And as we behold the flames that soar aloft in Emily's soul, then are we as heedless as she was of the sorrows of the dead wood. No misfortune but has its horizon, no sadness but shall know comfort, for the man who in the midst of his suffering, in the midst of the grief that must come to him as to all, has learned to espy Nature's ample gesture beneath all sorrow and suffering, and has

become aware that this gesture alone is real. "The sage, who is lord of his life, can never truly be said to suffer." wrote an admirable woman, who had known much sorrow herself. "It is from the heights above that he looks down on his life, and if to-day he should seem to suffer, it is only because he has allowed his thoughts to incline towards the less perfect part of his soul." Emily Brontë not only breathes life into tenderness, loyalty, and love, but into hatred and wickedness also; nay, into the very fiercest revengefulness, the most deliberate perfidy; nor does she deem it incumbent upon her to pardon, for pardon implies only incomplete comprehension. She sees, she admits, and she loves. She admits the evil as well as the good, she gives life to both; well knowing that evil, when all is said, is only righteousness strayed from the path. She reveals to us

— not with the moralist's arbitrary formula, but as men and years reveal the truths we have wit to grasp — the final helplessness of evil, brought face to face with life; the final appeasement of all things in nature as well as in death, "which is only the triumph of life over one of its specialised forms." She shows how the dexterous lie, begotten of genius and strength, is forced to bow down before the most ignorant, puniest truth; she shows the self-deception of hatred that sows, all unwilling, the seeds of gladness and love in the life that it anxiously schemes to destroy. She is, perhaps, the first to base a plea for indulgence on the great law of heredity; and when, at the end of her book, she goes to the village churchyard and visits the eternal resting-place of her heroes, the grass grows green alike over grave of tyrant and martyr; and she wonders

how "any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth."

§ 102.

I am well aware that here we are dealing with a woman of genius; but genius only throws into bolder relief all that can, and actually does, take place in the lives of all men; otherwise were it genius no longer, but incoherence or madness. It becomes clear to us, after a time, that genius is by no means confined to the extraordinary; and that veritable superiority is composed of elements that every day offers to every man. But we are not considering literature now; and indeed, not by her literary gifts, but by her inner life, was Emily Brontë comforted; for it by no means follows that moral activity waits on brilliant literary powers. Had she remained silent, nor ever grasped a

pen, still had there been no diminution of the power within her, of the smile and the fulness of love; still had she worn the air of one who knew whither her steps were tending; and the profound certainty that dwelt within her still had proclaimed that she had known how to make her peace, far up on the heights, with the great disquiet and misery of the world. We should never have known of her — that is all.

There is much to be learned from this humble life, and yet were it perhaps not well to hold it forth as an example to such as already incline overmuch to resignation, for these it might mislead. It is a life that would seem to have been wholly passive — and to be passive is not good for all. She died a virgin in her twenty-ninth year: and it is sad to die a virgin. Is it not the paramount duty of every human

being to offer to his destiny all that can be offered to the destiny of man? And indeed we had far better leave behind us work unfinished than life itself incomplete. It is good to be indifferent to vain or idle pleasures; but we have no right almost voluntarily to neglect the most important chances of indispensable happiness. The soul that is unhappy may have within it cause for noble regret. To look largely on the sadness of one's life is to make essay, in the darkness, of the wings that shall one day enable us to soar high above this sadness. Effort was lacking, perhaps, in Emily Brontë's life. In her soul there was wealth of passion and freedom and daring, but in her life timidity, silence, inertness, conventions, and prejudice; the very things that in thought she despised. This is the history often of the too-meditative soul. But it is difficult to pass judgment on an

entire existence; and here there were much to be said of the devotion wherewith she sacrificed the best years of her youth to an undeserving, though unfortunate, brother. Our remarks then, in a case such as this, must be understood generally only; but still, how long and how narrow is the path that leads from the soul to life! Our thoughts of love, of justice and loyalty, our thoughts of bold ambition — what are all these but acorns that fall from the oak in the forest? and must not thousands and tens of thousands be lost and rot in the lichen ere a single tree spring to life? "She had a beautiful soul," said, speaking of another woman, the woman whose words I quoted above, "a wide intellect, and tender heart, but ere these qualities could issue forth into life they had perforce to traverse a straitened character. Again and again have I wondered at this want

of self-knowledge, of return to self. The man who would wish us to see the deepest recess of his life will begin by telling us all that he thinks and he feels, will lead us to his point of view; we are conscious, perhaps, of much elevation of soul; then, as we enter with him still further into his life, he tells of his conduct, his joys and his sorrows; and in these we detect not a gleam of the soul that had shone through his thoughts and desires. When the trumpet is sounded for action, the instincts rush in, the character hastens between; but the soul stands aloof: the soul, which is man's very highest, being like the princess who elects to live on in arrogant penury rather than soil her hands with ordinary labour." Yes, alas, all is useless till such time as we have learned to harden our hands; to transform the gold and silver of thought into a key that shall open, not the ivory gate of our dreams, but the very door

of this our dwelling—into a cup that shall hold, not only the wondrous water of dreams, but the living water that falls, drop by drop, on our roof—into scales, not content vaguely to balance schemes for the future, but that record, with unerring accuracy, what we have done to-day. The very loftiest ideal has taken no root within us, so long as it penetrate not every limb, so long as it palpitate not at our finger-tip. Some there are whose intellect profits by this return to self; with others, the character gains. The first have clearest vision for all that concerns not themselves, that calls them not to action; but it is above all when stern reality confronts them, and time for action has come, that the eyes of the others glow bright. One might almost believe in there being an intellectual consciousness, languidly resting for ever upon an immovable throne, whence she issues

commands to the will through faithless or indolent envoys, and a moral consciousness, incessantly stirring, afoot, at all times ready to march. It may be that this latter consciousness depends on the former — indeed who shall say that she is not the former, wearied from long repose, wherein she has learned all that was to be learned; that has at last determined to rise, to descend the steps of inactivity and sally forth into life? And all will be well, if only she have not tarried so long that her limbs refuse their office. Is it not preferable sometimes to act in opposition to our thoughts than never dare to act in accord with them? Rarely indeed is the active error irremediable; men and things are quickly on the spot, eager to set it right; but they are helpless before the passive error that has shunned contact with the real. Let all this, however, by no means be construed into meaning that

the intellectual consciousness must be starved, or its growth arrested, for fear lest it outpace the moral consciousness. We need have no fear; no ideal conceived by man can be too admirable for life to conform with it. To float the smallest act of justice or love requires a very torrent of desire for good. For our conduct only to be honest we must have thoughts within us ten times loftier than our conduct. Even to keep somewhat clear of evil bespeaks enormous craving for good. Of all the forces in the world there is none melts so quickly away as the thought that has to descend into every-day life; wherefore we must needs be heroic in thought for our deeds to pass muster, or at the least be harmless.

§ 103.

Let us once again, and for the last time, return to obscure destinies. They teach us that, physical misfortune apart, there is remedy for all; and that to complain of destiny is only to expose our own feebleness of soul. We are told in the history of Rome how a certain Julius Sabinus, a senator from Gaul, headed a revolt against the Emperor Vespasian, and was duly defeated. He might have sought refuge among the Germans, but only by leaving his young wife, Eponina, behind him, and he had not the heart to forsake her. At moments of disaster and sorrow we learn the true value of life; nor did Julius Sabinus welcome the idea of death. He possessed a villa, beneath which there stretched vast subterranean caverns,

known only to him and two freedmen. This villa he caused to be burned, and the rumour was spread that he had sought death by poison, and that his body was consumed by the flames. Eponina herself was deceived, says Plutarch, whose story I follow, with the additions made thereto by the Comte de Champagny, the historian of Antoninus; and when Martialis the freedman told her of her husband's self-slaughter, she lay for three days and three nights on the ground, refusing all nourishment. When Sabinus heard of her grief, he took pity and caused her to know that he lived. She none the less mourned and shed floods of tears, in the daytime, when people were near, but when night fell she sought him below in his cavern. For seven long months did she thus confront the shades, every night, to be with her husband; she even attempted

to help him escape; she shaved off his hair and his beard, wrapped his head round with fillets, disguised him, and then had him sent, in a bundle of clothes, to her own native city. But his stay there becoming unsafe, she soon brought him back to his cavern; and herself divided her stay between town and the country, spending her nights with him, and from time to time going to town to be seen by her friends. She became big with child, and, by means of an unguent wherewith she anointed her body, her condition remained unsuspected by even the women at the baths, which at that time were taken in common. And when her confinement drew nigh she went down to her cavern, and there, with no midwife, alone, she gave birth to two sons, as a lioness throws off her cubs. She nourished her twins with her milk, she nursed them through childhood;

and for nine years she stood by her husband in the gloom and the darkness. But Sabinus at last was discovered and taken to Rome He surely would seem to have merited Vespasian's pardon. Eponina led forth the two sons she had reared in the depths of the earth, and said to the Emperor, "These have I brought into the world and fed on my milk, that we might one day be more to implore thy forgiveness." Tears filled the eyes of all who were there; but Cæsar stood firm, and the brave Gaul at last was reduced to demand permission to die with her husband. "I have known more happiness with him in the darkness," she cried, "than thou ever shalt know, O Cæsar, in the full glare of the sunshine, or in all the splendour of thy mighty empire."

Who that has a heart within him can doubt the truth of her words, or think

without longing of the darkness that so great a love illumined? Many a dreary, miserable hour must have crawled by as they crouched in their hiding-place; but are there any, even among those who care only for the pettiest pleasures of life, who would not rather love with such depth and fervour in what was almost a tomb, than flaunt a frigid affection in the heat and light of the sun? Eponina's magnificent cry is the cry of all those whose hearts have been touched by love; as it is also the cry of those whose soul has discovered an interest, duty, or even a hope, in life. The flame that inspired Eponina inspires the sage also, lost in monotonous hours as she in her gloomy retreat. Love is the unconscious sun of our soul; and it is when its beams are most ardent, and purest, that they bear most surprising resemblance to those that the soul, aglow with justice and truth,

with beauty and majesty, has kindled within itself, and adds to, incessantly. Is not the happiness that accident brought to the heart of Eponina within reach of every heart, so the will to possess it be there? Is not all that was sweetest in this love of hers — the devotion of self, the transformation of regret into happiness, of pleasure renounced into joy that abides in the heart for ever; the interest awakened each day by the feeblest glimmer of light, so it fall on a thing one admires; the immersion in radiance, in happiness susceptible of infinite expansion, for one has only to worship the more — are not all these, and a thousand other forces no less helpful, no less consoling, to be found in the intensest life of our soul, of our heart, of our thoughts? And was Eponina's love other than a sudden lightning flash from this life of the soul, come to her, all unconscious and unprepared?

Love does not always reflect; often indeed does it need no reflection, no search into self, to enjoy what is best in thought; but, none the less, all that is best in love is closely akin to all that is best in thought. Suffering seemed ever radiant in aspect to Eponina, because of her love; but cannot this thing that love brings about, all unknowing, by fortunate accident, be also achieved by thought, meditation, by the habit of looking beyond our immediate trouble, and being more joyous than fate would seem to demand? To Eponina there came not a sorrow but kindled yet one more torch in the gloom of her cavern; and does not the sadness that forces the soul back into itself, to the retreat it has made, kindle deep consolation there? And, as the noble Eponina has taken us back to the days of persecution, may we not liken such sorrow to the pagan executioner

who, suddenly touched by grace, or perhaps admiration, in the very midst of the torture that he was inflicting, flung himself down headlong at the feet of his victim, speaking words of tenderest sympathy; who demanded to share her suffering, and finally besought, in a kiss, to be told the way to her heaven.

§ 104.

Go where we will, the plentiful river of life flows on, beneath the canopy of heaven. It flows between prison walls, where the sun never gleams on its waters; as it flows by the palace steps, where all is gladness and glory. Not our concern the depth of this river, or its width, or the strength of its current, as it streams on for ever, pertaining to all; but of deepest importance to us is the size and the purity of the cup that we plunge in

its waters. For whatever of life we absorb must needs take the form of this cup, as this, too, has taken the form of our thoughts and our feelings; being modelled, indeed, on the breast of our intimate destiny as the breast of a goddess once served for the cup of the sculptor of old. Every man has the cup of his fashioning, and most often the cup he has learned to desire. When we murmur at fate, let our grievance be only that she grafted not in our heart the wish for, or thought of, a cup more ample and perfect. For indeed in the wish alone does inequality lie, but this inequality vanishes the moment it has been perceived. Does the thought that our wish might be nobler not at once bring nobility with it; does not the breast of our destiny throb to this new aspiration, thereby expanding the docile cup of the ideal — the cup whose metal is pliable still to the cold stern hour

of death? No cause for complaint has he who has learned that his feelings are lacking in generous ardour, or the other who nurses within him a hope for a little more happiness, a little more beauty, a little more justice. For here all things come to pass in the way that they tell us it happens with the felicity of the elect, of whom each one is robed in gladness, and wears the garment befitting his stature. Nor can he desire a happiness more perfect than the happiness which he possesses, without the desire wherewith he desired at once bringing fulfilment with it. If I envy with noble envy the happiness of those who are able to plunge a heavier cup, and more radiant than mine, there where the great river is brightest, I have, though I know it not, my excellent share of all that they draw from the river, and my lips repose by the side of their lips on the rim of the shining cup.

§ 105.

It may be remembered perhaps that, before these digressions, we spoke of a woman whose friend asked her, wonderingly, "Can any man be worthy of your love?" The same question might have been asked of Emily Brontë, as indeed of many others; and in this world there are thousands of souls, of loftiest intention, that do yet forfeit the best years of love in constant self-interrogation as to the future of their affections. Nay, more — in the empire of destiny it is to the image of love that the great mass of complaints and regrets come flocking; the image of love around which hover sluggish desire, extravagant hope, and fears engendered of vanity. At root of all this is much pride, and counterfeit poetry, and falsehood. The soul that is

misunderstood is most often the one that has made the least effort to gain some knowledge of self. The feeblest ideal, the one that is narrowest, straitest, most often will thrive on deception and fear, on exaction and petty contempt. We dread above all lest any should slight, or pass by unnoticed, the virtues and thoughts, the spiritual beauty, that exist only in our imagination. It is with merits of this nature as it is with our material welfare — hope clings most persistently to that which we probably never shall have the strength to acquire. The cheat through whose mind some momentary thought of amendment has passed, is amazed that we offer not instant, surpassing homage to the feeling of honour that has, for brief space, found shelter within him. But if we are truly pure, and sincere, and unselfish; if our thoughts soar aloft of themselves, in all simpleness, high above

vanity or instinctive selfishness, then are we far less concerned than those who are near us should understand, should approve, or admire. Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus Pius are not known to have ever complained that men could not understand them. They hugged no belief to themselves that something extraordinary, incomprehensible, lay buried within them; they held, on the contrary, that whatever was best in their virtue was that which it needed no effort for all men to grasp and admit. But there are some morbid virtues that are passed by unnoticed, and not without reason — for there will almost always be some superior reason for the powerlessness of a feeling — morbid virtues to which we often ascribe far too great an importance; and that virtue will surely be morbid that we rate over highly and hold to deserve the respectful attention of others. In a

morbid virtue there is often more harm than there is in a healthy vice; in any event it is further removed from truth; and there is but little to hope for when we are divided from truth. As our ideal becomes loftier so does it become more real; and the nobler our soul, the less does it dread that it meet not a soul of its stature; for it must have drawn near unto truth, in whose neighbourhood all things must take of its greatness. When Dante had gained the third sphere, and stood in the midst of the heavenly lights, all shining with uniform splendour, he saw that around him naught moved, and wondered was he standing motionless there, or indeed drawing nearer unto the seat of God? So he cast his eyes upon Beatrice; and she seemed more beautiful to him; wherefore he knew that he was approaching his goal. And so can we too count the steps that we take on the highway of truth,

by the increase of love that comes for all that goes with us in life; the increase of love and of glad curiosity, of respect and of deep admiration.

§ 106.

Men, as a rule, sally forth from their homes seeking beauty and joy, truth and love; and are glad to be able to say to their children, on their return, that they have met nothing. To be for ever complaining argues much pride; and those who accuse love and life are the ones who imagine that these should bestow something more than they can acquire for themselves. Love, it is true, like all else, claims the highest possible ideal; but every ideal that conforms not with some strenuous inward reality is nothing but falsehood — sterile and futile, obsequious falsehood. Two or three ideals, that lie out of our

reach, will suffice to paralyse life. It is wrong to believe that loftiness of soul is governed by the loftiness of desire or dream. The dreams of the weak will be often more numerous, lovelier, than are those of the strong; for these dreams absorb all their energy, all their activity. The perpetual craving for loftiness does not count in our moral advancement if it be not the shadow thrown by the life we have lived, by the firm and experienced will that has come in close kinship with man. Then, indeed, as one places a rod at the foot of the steeple to tell of its height by the shadow, so may we lead forth this craving of ours to the midst of the plain that is lit by the sun of external reality, that thus we may tell what relation exists between the shadow thrown by the hour and the dome of eternity.

§ 107.

It is well that a noble heart should await a great love; better still that this heart, all expectant, should cease not from loving; and that, as it loves, it should scarcely be conscious of its desire for more exquisite love. In love as in life, expectation avails us but little; through loving we learn to love; and it is the so-called disillusions of pettier love that will, the most simply and faithfully, feed the immovable flame of the mightier love that shall come, it may be, to illumine the rest of our life.

We treat disillusions often with scantiest justice. We conceive them of sorrowful countenance, pale and discouraged; whereas they are really the very first smiles of truth. Why should disillusion distress you, if you are a man of honest intention,

if you strive to be just, and of service; if you seek to be happy and wise? Would you rather live on in the world of your dreams and your errors than in the world that is real? Only too often does many a promising nature waste its most precious hours in the struggle of beautiful dream against inevitable law, whose beauty is only perceived when every vestige of strength has been sapped by the exquisite dream. If love has deceived you, do you think that it would have been better for you all your life to regard love as something it is not, and never can be? Would such an illusion not warp your most significant actions; would it not for many days hide from you some part of the truth that you seek? Or if you imagine that greatness lay in your grasp, and disillusion has taken you back to your place in the second rank; have you the right, for the rest of your life, to curse the envoy of

truth? For, after all, was it not truth your illusion was seeking, assuming it to have been sincere? We should try to regard disillusions as mysterious, faithful friends, as councillors none can corrupt. And should there be one more cruel than the rest, that for an instant prostrates you, do not murmur to yourself through your tears that life is less beautiful than you had dreamed it to be, but rather that in your dream there must have been something lacking, since real life has failed to approve. And indeed the much-vaunted strength of the strenuous soul is built up of disillusions only, that this soul has cheerfully welcomed. Every deception, and love disappointed, every hope that has crumbled to dust, is possessed of a strength of its own that it adds to the strength of your truth; and the more disillusions there are that fall to the earth at your feet, the more surely and nobly will

great reality shine on you — even as the rays of the sun are beheld the more clearly in winter, as they pierce through the leafless branches of the trees of the forest.

§ 108.

And if it be a great love that you seek, how can you believe that a soul shall be met with of beauty as great as you dream it to be, if you seek it with nothing but dreams? Have you the right to expect that definite words and positive actions shall offer themselves in exchange for mere formless desire, and yearning, and vision? Yet thus it is most of us act. And if some fortunate chance at last accords our desire, and places us in presence of the being who is all we had dreamed her to be — are we entitled to hope that our idle and wandering

cravings shall long be in unison with her vigorous, established reality? Our ideal will never be met with in life unless we have first achieved it within us to the fullest extent in our power. Do you hope to discover and win for yourself a loyal, profound, inexhaustible soul, loving and quick with life, faithful and powerful, unconstrained, free: generous, brave, and benevolent — if you know less well than this soul what all these qualities mean? And how should you know, if you have not loved them and lived in their midst, as this soul has loved and lived? Most exacting of all things, unskilful, thick-sighted, is the moral beauty, perfection, or goodness that is still in the shape of desire. If it be your one hope to meet with an ideal soul, would it not be well that you yourself should endeavour to draw nigh to your own ideal? Be sure that by no other means

will you ever obtain your desire. And as you approach this ideal it will dawn on you more and more clearly how fortunate and wisely ordained it has been that the ideal should ever be different from what our vague hopes were expecting. So too when the ideal takes shape, as it comes into contact with life, will it soften, expand, and lose its rigidity, incessantly growing more noble. And then will you readily perceive, in the creature you love, all that which is eternally true in yourself, and solidly righteous, and essentially beautiful; for only the good in our heart can advise us of the goodness that hides by our side. Then, at last, will the imperfections of others no longer seem of importance to you, for they will no longer be able to wound your vanity, selfishness, and ignorance; imperfections, that is, which have ceased to resemble your own; for it is

the evil that lies in ourselves that is ever least tolerant of the evil that dwells within others.

§ 109.

Let us have the same confidence in love that we have in life; for confidence is of our essence; and the thought that works the most harm in all things is the one that inclines us to look with mistrust on reality. I have known more than one life that love broke asunder; but if it had not been love, these lives would no doubt have been broken no less by friendship or apathy, by doubt, hesitation, indifference, inaction. For that only which in itself is fragile can be rent in the heart by love; and where all is broken that the heart contains, then must all have been far too frail. There exists not a creature but must more than once have believed that

his life was crushed; but they whose life has indeed been shattered, and has fallen to ruin, owe their misfortune often to some strange vanity of the very ruin. Fortunate and unfortunate hazards there must of necessity be in love as in all the rest of our destiny. It may so come about that one whose spirit and heart are abounding with tenderness, energy, and the noblest of human desires, shall meet, on his first setting forth, all unsought, the soul that shall satisfy each single craving of love in the ecstasy of permanent joy; the soul that shall content the loftiest yearning no less than the lowliest: the vastest, the mightiest no less than the daintiest, sweetest: the most eternal no less than the most evanescent. He, it may be, shall instantly find the heart whereto he can give — the heart which will ever receive — all that is best in himself. It may happen that he shall

at once have attained the soul that perchance is unique; the soul that is satisfied always, and always filled with desire; the soul that can ever receive many thousand times more than is given, and that never fails to return many thousand times more than it receives. For the love that the years cannot alter is built up of exchanges like these, of sweet inequality; and naught do we ever truly possess but that which we give in our love; and whatever our love bestows, we are no longer alone to enjoy.

§ 110.

Destinies sometimes are met with that thus are perfectly happy; and each man, it may be, is entitled to hope that such may one day be his; yet must his hope be never permitted to fasten chains on his life. All he can do is to make

preparation one day to deserve such a love; and he will be most patient and tranquil who incessantly strives to this end. It might so have happened that he whom we spoke of just now should, day after day, from youth to old age, have passed by the side of the wall behind which his happiness lay waiting, enwrapped in too secret a silence. But if happiness lie yonder side of the wall, must despair and disaster of necessity dwell on the other? Is not something of happiness to be found in our thus being able to pass by the side of our happiness? Is it not better to feel that a mere slender chance — transparent, one almost might call it — is all that extends between us and the exquisite love that we dream of, than to be divided for ever therefrom by all that is worthless within us, undeserving, inhuman, abnormal? Happy is he who can gather

the flower, and bear it away in his bosom; yet have we no cause to pity the other who walks until nightfall, steeped in the glorious perfume of the flower no eyes can behold. Must the life be a failure, useless and valueless, that is not as completely happy as it possibly might have been? It is you yourself would have brought what was best in the love you regret; and if, as we said, the soul at the end possess only what it has given, does not something already belong to us when we are incessantly seeking for chances of giving? Ah yes — I declare that the joy of a perfect, abiding love is the greatest this world contains; and yet, if you find not this love, naught will be lost of all you have done to deserve it, for this will go to deepen the peace of your heart, and render still braver and purer the calm of the rest of your days.

§ III.

And, besides, we always can love. If our own love be admirable, most of the joys of admirable love will be ours. In the most perfect love, the lovers' happiness will not be exactly the same, be their union never so close; for the better of the two needs must love with a love that is deeper; and the one that loves with a deeper love must be surely the happier. Let your task be to render yourself worthy of love — and this even more for your own happiness than for that of another. For be sure that when love is unequal, and the hours come clouded with sorrow, it is not the wiser of the two who will suffer the most — not the one that shows more generosity, justice, more high-minded passion. The one who is better will rarely become

the victim deserving our pity. For, indeed, to be truly a victim it must be our own faults, our injustice, wrong-doing, beneath which we suffer. However imperfect you be, you still may suffice for the love of a marvellous being; but for your love, if you are not perfect, that being will never suffice. If fortune one day should lead to your dwelling the woman adorned with each gift of heart and of intellect — such a woman as history tells of, a heroine of glory, happiness, love — you will still be all unaware if you have not learned, yourself, to detect and to love these gifts in actual life; and what is actual life to each man but the life that he lives himself? All that is loyal within you will flower in the loyalty of the woman you love; whatever of truth there abides in your soul will be soothed by the truth that is hers; and her strength of

character can be only enjoyed by that which is strong in you. And when a virtue of the being we love finds not, on the threshold of our heart, a virtue that resembles it somewhat, then is it all unaware to whom it shall give the gladness it brings.

§ 112.

And whatever the fate your affections may meet with, do you never lose courage; above all, do not think that, love's happiness having passed by you, you will never, right up to the end, know the great joy of human life. For though happiness appear in the form of a torrent, or a river that flows underground, of a whirlpool or tranquil lake, its source still is ever the same that lies deep down in our heart; and the unhappiest man of all men can conceive an idea of great joy. It is true that in love there is

ecstasy that he doubtless never will know; but this ecstasy would leave deep melancholy only in the earnest and faithful heart, if there were not in veritable love something more stable than ecstasy, more profound and more steadfast; and all that in love is profoundest, most stable and steadfast, is profoundest in noble lives too — is most stable and steadfast in them. Not to all men is it given to be hero or genius, victorious, admirable always, or even to be simply happy in exterior things; but it lies in the power of the least favoured among us to be loyal, and gentle, and just, to be generous and brotherly; he that has least gifts of all can learn to look on his fellows without envy or hatred, without malice or futile regret; the outcast can take his strange, silent part (which is not always that of least service) in the gladness of those who are near him;

he that has barely a talent can still learn to forgive an offence with an ever nobler forgiveness, can find more excuses for error, more admiration for human word and deed; and the man there are none to love can love, and reverence, love. And, acting thus, he too will have drawn near the source whither happy ones flock —oftener far than one thinks, and in the most ardent hours of happiness even— the source over which they bend, to make sure that they truly are happy. Far down, at the root of love's joys—as at the root of the humble life of the upright man from whom fate has withheld her smile—it is confidence, sincerity, generosity, tenderness, that alone are truly fixed and unchangeable. Love throws more lustre still on these points of light, and therefore must love be sought. For the greatest advantage of love is that it reveals to us many a peaceful and

gentle truth. The greatest advantage of love is that it gives us occasion to love and admire in one person, sole and unique, what we should have had neither knowledge nor strength to love and admire in the many; and that thus it expands our heart for the time to come. And at the root of the most marvellous love there never is more than the simplest felicity, an adoration, a tenderness within the understanding of all, a security, faith, and fidelity all can acquire, an intensely human admiration, devotion — and all these the eager, unfortunate heart could know too, in its sorrowful life, had it only a little less impatience and bitterness, a little more initiative and energy.

THE END